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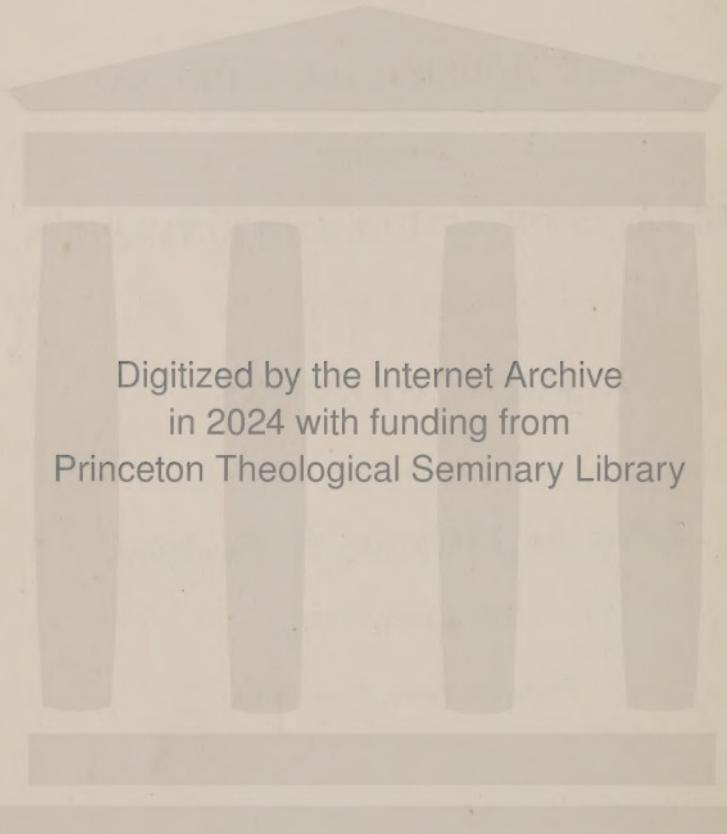
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By the same Author.

SOME MODERN DIFFICULTIES
RESPECTING
THE FACTS OF NATURE AND REVELATION,
CONSIDERED IN
FOUR SERMONS
PREACHED
Before the University of Cambridge,
IN LENT, 1861.

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HULSEAN LECTURES, 1865,

AND

THREE SERMONS.



*OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST
THE SUBJECT OF GROWTH IN WISDOM.*

FOUR SERMONS

(*BEING THE HULSEAN LECTURES FOR 1865*)

Preached before the University of Cambridge:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

THREE SERMONS, PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY
OF CAMBRIDGE IN FEBRUARY 1864.

✓ BY
THE REV. J. MOORHOUSE, M.A.

ST JOHN'S COLLEGE.

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P R E F A C E.

THE object of these Lectures is stated with sufficient plainness in the Table of Contents ; but it may perhaps be necessary to prefix a word of explanation with reference to the publication of the Three Sermons which will be found at the end of this volume. They were preached before the University of Cambridge in February, 1864, and are published here, partly at the request of friends who heard them, and partly because it seemed to the author, that they might be found to elucidate many difficulties, which, in the Lectures, could not be investigated

with that degree of care and fulness which was desirable. The Author has been induced to seek for them a greater publicity, in the humble hope, that with all their defects, they may be made to contribute, in some small degree, to the resolution of those intricate, but deeply interesting questions which are now absorbing the attention of Christ's Church.

S, SOUTHAMPTON STREET,
FITZROY SQUARE.

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LECTURE I.

ST MATTHEW xxviii. 18, 19.

Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.

THE present Bishop of London has remarked¹—and the truth of the observation is becoming daily more apparent—that “the objections of infidelity are much more connected now than in former times, with a minute critical examination of the Sacred Books,” and that therefore “it is on the field of criticism that it must be met and overthrown.” But the field of historical criticism is now so vast in extent, and the objects comprised within it are increasing so rapidly in number, and in the difficulty of the problems which they suggest for solution, that to examine, or even to survey and describe adequately any considerable portion of it, would require far more time and space than can be allowed for these

¹ *Dangers and Safeguards.*

lectures. To repeat well-known evidences would be useless, to exhibit fairly those which might naturally be looked for, impossible, even if desirable. There is however an intermediate, and I trust, under present circumstances, a not altogether unwarrantable course, which may perhaps be usefully adopted. It may be possible to point out clearly the ultimate issues involved in present controversies, and to indicate their precise bearing upon the doctrine of the Incarnation, upon that, viz. which is by common consent the central doctrine in the system of revealed truth. This course of investigation, by disclosing at once the degree to which the prevalent scepticism endangers the dearest possessions of our faith, and the nature of the alternatives which it offers for the loss of these, may perhaps lead some to more careful and solemn investigation of the points at issue—to greater deliberation in judgment, and greater modesty of statement.

Investigation is indeed inevitable—nay, most desirable—the only thing to be deprecated is, that it should be superficial and irreverent. Now, if it can be shown on the one hand, how far the possible results of a free critical enquiry into the authorship and composition of the sacred Scriptures are consistent with a recognition of our Lord's Divine nature and atoning work, and on the other, what is the nature of those conclusions to which we must

be driven through disbelief of those great truths—men may at least be able to see what they risk, and where they risk it,—in the course of those historical enquiries which are becoming daily more necessary.

I have no desire that such an enquiry should deter any man from the most thorough and rigid examination of the claims of Holy Scripture. The Scriptures are not to be considered true, because it would be dangerous to reject them. Let everything be sacrificed to truth. If truth requires us to give up all belief in a heavenly Father and a living Saviour, to resign all hope of a higher life, or of a glorious immortality, even let these foundations of our earthly and eternal happiness be subverted, rather than that we should either consciously or unconsciously acquiesce in a lie! Only let us know what we are doing. In the course of our investigations let us be distinctly conscious of their inevitable issues. Let us not advance carelessly along the road of sceptical criticism, admitting easily unproved assertions, or smiling thoughtlessly at insidious suggestions, under the fond impression either that little is at stake, or that the substance of the faith may be made more acceptable and secure by destroying its historical embodiment. Do not suppose that the danger here suggested is merely chimerical. Looking back to the writings of those German theologians who preceded Strauss, and who expressed so much

horror at the destructive character of his criticism Quinet exclaims¹: "In the midst of this ever-increasing demolition, there is one thing, at which I cannot cease to wonder, it is the tranquillity of all those men who seem not at all to understand what they are doing, and who, each day effacing some part of the Bible, are not a whit the less at ease regarding the future fate of their belief." They had been lulled into this false security, partly because they had never seriously striven to realize the end to which they were unconsciously advancing, and partly because the philosophical system whose spell was upon them concealed its real nature beneath specious professions. "To convert Germany to doubt," says the writer just quoted², "a system was wanted which concealing scepticism under faith, using much circumlocution to reach its object, dwelling on imagination, on poetry, on spirituality, should transfigure what it threw into the shade, build up what it destroyed, affirm in words, what in effect it denied." We have seen the result of this scepticism in Germany, and surely it can be no more unphilosophical to examine the worth of rationalistic than of revolutionary principles, in the light of their consequences.

¹ Review of Strauss's *Life of Jesus* in *Revue des deux Mondes*. Beard's Trans. p. 8.

² Ibid. p. 5.

Let it be remembered too, that the fundamental canons of sceptical criticism are furnished for the most part, by the conclusions of some system of philosophy. Thus Strauss acknowledges that “from the very first his *Life of Jesus* has stood in an intimate relation with the philosophy of Hegel¹.” It was at the dictation of this philosophy that he asserted a miracle to be an impossibility², declaring “even the conception of such a possibility is so far out of the question that I must lose my senses before I could receive anything of the kind³. ” Renan again, though he would fain deny the accusation, yet shows most distinctly by his line of argument that he is compelled to a similar conclusion by the exigencies of a materialistic philosophy. It is this hypothesis of the impossibility of a miracle which dictates the critical canon common to Strauss and Renan—“that a supernatural account cannot be admitted as such”—and though these critics may differ as to the meaning of such an account—the Hegelian asserting that it betokens the activity of a mythical imagination, the materialist, that “it always implies credulity or imposture⁴,”—they are entirely agreed in the conclusion that “it is to be considered as not historical⁵. ”

¹ Strauss, *Hegel, and their Opinions*, Beard, p. 21.

² *Life of Jesus*, Vol. I. p. 64.

³ Beard, p. 23.

⁴ Renan’s *Life of Jesus*, p. 30.

⁵ Strauss’s *Life of Jesus*, Vol. I. p. 88.

Those only who have studied the *Life of Jesus* by these two eminent critics, with the view of discovering the extent to which this conclusion has determined the form and substance of those works, those only know the utterly disjointed and fragmentary condition to which they would be reduced, by the omission everywhere of what was confessedly or inferentially deduced from it! If then the substance of sceptical criticism so largely depends upon one assumption, and that in turn is necessitated by certain philosophical theories, then without denying the necessity for meeting critics on their own chosen field, it would seem to be the simplest, as it is certainly the most satisfactory answer to that criticism, to prove these theories to be untenable. And, if only philosophical theories can be reduced to a comprehensible form, if only they can once be made tangible to the common sense of mankind, this is not so difficult a task as might be supposed. For as Lewes¹ well says of the transcendental doctrine of Bishop Berkeley, the common sense of mankind must in all such questions be the ultimate arbiter. The only difficulty which men felt and feel is to understand the subject in dispute. State to them clearly, for instance, that they are to decide on the question, whether our sensations are caused by an external matter, which though unlike them, forms

¹ *Biographical History of Philosophy*, p. 477.

their stimulus and occasion, or by the direct operation of the Divine Will, acting directly and uniformly on our mind without the intervention of any external substance, and the answer is not for a moment doubtful. The former assumption is seen (at least after due reflection) to be more consonant with our irresistible belief, and therefore must be finally accepted. If we can state as clearly the alternative proposed by the two great schemes of modern philosophy, the answer should not be less certain and conclusive.

It will, however, contribute greatly not only to the force, but also to the clearness with which such a question can be put, if we are able to indicate the precise relation which exists between the existing platform of sceptical opinion, and the end towards which that opinion is constantly impelled by the prevailing tendency of more advanced and related speculation. For in general the progress of thought is effected under the influence of two co-operating forces; first, the inward desire of attaining complete logical consistency; and, secondly, the external influence of the spirit of the age.

Thus, if a man have discovered as he imagines that Holy Scripture is untrustworthy, he will probably be led to hold, as a necessary logical consequence, that the highest revelation which has been made to man, is that which is found within the

limits of the individual consciousness. And, having reached this point in the progress of thought, he may logically go on to become either a Deist or a Pantheist; to hold either that there exists an Almighty Spiritual Being who created and governs all things, or that the only power which operates in earth and heaven is that blind impersonal force which throbs everywhere beneath the veil of appearances.

But now, while he is hesitating at the junction of the ways, he will be seized upon by another influence—viz. the spirit of the age, that general all-pervading tendency of thought, which borrows its direction, and takes its form from the favourite speculations of the time; speculations which are no sooner breathed upon the air than they are caught and disseminated by a thousand agencies in a thousand varying forms of expression or insinuation, thus pressing from every side with a secret, unseen, but almost irresistible power upon all who have nothing better to oppose to them than their own individual impressions. Now, if we can fix the general form of existing rationalistic belief we shall have ascertained the position and temptation of the modern thinker; while at the same time if we can delineate the features of those two great philosophical theories, which have been systematically developed out of the general belief by the most

advanced and powerful of rationalistic speculators, we shall have determined the tendency of the spirit of the age.

The most general, and at present most popular form of rationalistic belief, has been thus stated with great accuracy and fairness by Mr Lecky. The “central conception” of rationalism, he remarks¹, “is the elevation of conscience into a position of supreme authority as the religious organ, a verifying faculty discriminating between truth and error. It regards Christianity as designed to preside over the moral development of mankind, as a conception, which is to become more and more sublimated and spiritualized as the human mind passes into new phases, and is able to bear the splendour of a more unclouded light. Religion it believes to be no exception to the general law of progress, but rather the highest form of its manifestation, and its earlier systems but the necessary steps of an imperfect development. In its eyes the moral element of Christianity is as the sun in the heaven, and dogmatic systems are as the clouds, that intercept and temper the exceeding brightness of its ray.”

Divesting the author’s description of its metaphoric dress, it sets forth the faith of the popular rationalism as follows. First, religion in general is a product of the human soul, a form of our moral

¹ *Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe*, Vol. I. p. 182.

development, and thus not a book, but the moral consciousness is the supreme standard of religious truth. Secondly, that particular development of religion called Christianity is the highest form of moral truth which has been hitherto evolved from the human consciousness. Still, as first conceived by Christ, this truth was presented in an imperfect and rudimentary shape, its fundamental principles undeveloped, and their nature seriously obscured by connexion with a number of supernatural narratives and extraneous dogmatic instructions.

Remembering these facts, it thus becomes the duty of a rational Christian to select from the sacred Books those moral truths which may appear most excellent to his advanced and developed consciousness, setting aside the rest as no longer useful to him, though doubtless venerable for their age, and possibly once of service to a ruder generation. The consequences of such a free handling of the New Testament, though of course in relation to the spiritual life unhappy to the last degree, are yet often in a moral and speculative point of view less deplorable than might have been anticipated. In modern sceptical publications we are never horrified by the shameless ribaldry of such writers as Paine and Voltaire, seldom even pained by the puerile profanity of such materialists as Paulus. Rationalistic *Christians* (as they call themselves) ad-

mire with one consent the purity of Christian ethics, the beauty of the Redeemer's character. Nothing they think can be more admirable than those essentially Christian conceptions, "equality, fraternity, the suppression of war, the elevation of the poor, the love of truth, and the diffusion of liberty." Nothing can be more lovely, more tender, more sublimely simple than the white blamelessness of the perfect life; that life before whose purity and majesty they could almost bow down and worship. A religious system, which thus like that of ancient Rome gathers into one vast pantheon all the gods which the world has dreaded or adored, must ever be grateful to the tolerant and yet self-reliant temper of philosophers; and thus there can be little ground for astonishment, when we see so many philosophic or scientific intellects hastening to consecrate their speculations and discoveries by claiming for them a place in the gorgeous creature-temple of rationalism. For what can be more elastic than a faith without dogmas, what more charitable than a religion without worship, what more sublime than a development of divine knowledge, continually widening in its stream, and accelerating in its flow; what more comprehensive than a creed embracing every possible opinion within its ample domain, and including within the sweep of its boundless horizon the speculations of the remotest age!

But putting aside the truth of this creed, as a question not at present before us, what, let us ask, is its use, its sufficiency? It is easy to secure consent if we ask little enough, and if the sublimity of a creed is to be measured by the number of its adherents, then it would hardly be difficult to construct a creed of such perfect generality, that all but a very few must agree to adopt it. But what is the use of a set of words which explain nothing? What is the value of a combination of articulate sounds which only do not provoke contradiction? Is it the great object of investigation to discover what nobody will contradict? to form a creed of the future by excluding from that of the Church of Christ all but the emptiest truisms? Surely our object should be to rise to the conception of a truth as fruitful as it is comprehensive, which shall not only please, but mould and direct the future! And have we such a truth in the popular creed of rationalism? It tells us, indeed, that we are to select the type of our morality from the records of our Redeemer's life; but it adds, that our conscience must be the judge of what is best. Have we, then, no reliable divine direction in this matter? Must it always be possible for men to deny the Saviour's honesty with Renan, or His greatness, with Francis Newman, or, virtually, at least, His actual existence, with Strauss?

Or, again, what is defined when we are simply told

that religion is an evolution of the moral consciousness, and that our knowledge of the Divine Being will increase with the progress of ages? What is defined, when Bishop Colenso tells us¹, that he believes God called the world out of nothing, and made man in His own image—that former generations recognised His loving presence, Hebrew prophets telling us of His righteousness and goodness, His self-existence and Almighty Power; Roman philosophers² celebrating His beneficent wisdom as the one Ruler and Lawgiver of mankind; while even Indian mystics and Sikh Gooroos recognise His unity, omnipresence, loving providence, and essential truth! What is defined by all this, when the Bishop adds, that he believes it, not because it is sanctioned and explained in a supernatural revelation, but because he sees it with the eye of his spirit, as distinctly as he beholds the sun in the heavens!

If these great truths are to be taken out of connexion with all which in the Bible gave them definiteness of meaning, and held simply as abstractions, which commend themselves irresistibly to our acceptance, it will be necessary for the Bishop to add some explanation of them. For what can be more indefinite than those words, "man," "world," "God," which are used so easily and familiarly by the critic? They are the very words about whose

¹ *Pentateuch*, Vol. II. p. 380.

² Vol. I. conclusion.

meanings rival philosophical disputants have been contending since the beginning of time. Bishop Colenso is but at the beginning of his task. Can he then see his way as clearly through these philosophical difficulties, as through those merely critical ones which have brought him face to face with them ? Who shall be declared to be correct in his interpretation of these names of being, the idealist or materialist, Hegel or Comte, Strauss or Renan ? It is comparatively easy to fight with the words of an ancient document, but how will the critic deal with those awful, ultimate facts, of which that ancient document has been so long thought to contain the authoritative explanation ? and which now, without that interpretation start up from the arid desert of his arithmetical speculations a crueler and more inscrutable sphinx, propounding again the awful alternative that we read her riddle or die !

The position of such critics (and it is the position of the great majority of sceptical minds in England) is thus seen to be essentially transitional. Nothing is defined, nothing decided. They stand hovering uncertainly at the junction of two ways, without better guidance than the light of their own understanding. One of those ways they must ultimately take, it is little matter which : for though apparently divergent at first, they ultimately meet in the abyss of a common pantheism.

Let us then shortly endeavour to indicate the initial direction of these roads, and the nature of their common termination.

I said that there were only two roads; and it must be evident to any one acquainted with the progress of modern thought, that in the effort to explain independently the mysteries of existence, we must accept the guidance either of Hegel or Comte, we must choose between absolute idealism and materialistic pantheism !

Hegel assumes what Bishop Berkeley undoubtedly proved, that in consciousness we perceive not objects but only impressions. But the German philosopher goes further, and points out, in opposition to Fichte, that we can no more know mind than matter. For when we make our soul the object of contemplation, what is it which we see?—some unknown substratum called mind? or only mental phenomena, ideal forms, states of the consciousness? Manifestly only the latter, which alone therefore we can know!

We cannot know either the subject or object; but only those impressions, those ideas, which appear to imply the existence of a subject and object, and which in fact express the relations between the two. What then shall we conclude? This, it would seem, that we cannot know existences, but only phenomena, the effects viz. which those existences

produce upon us—the appearances under which they exhibit themselves. No, says Hegel; our knowledge is the measure of existence, nothing exists beyond what we know. But since we only know ideas, relations, are we then to conclude, it may well be asked, that we live in a universe which consists only of relations? Is God a relation? is nature? is the human soul? Even so, Hegel replies; ideas are the only realities; it is appearances which are the dream! But if relations exist, without things to be related, it is natural to ask how they came into existence. In his answer to this question, wild and incomprehensible as it may sound, Hegel discloses the method of that philosophy which he confidently pronounces the ultimate achievement of human thought. Every idea he teaches comes into real manifestation by positing its own contradiction, and then returns into the fulness of its positive existence by negating its own negation, by absorbing its opposite¹. It may perhaps be felt that when a man has so completely enveloped and lost himself in the clouds of abstraction, it is best not to follow him into such a region. Alas! we must do so. If we would understand the substance

¹ Chalybäus, *Historical Development of Speculative Philosophy from Kant to Hegel*, Chap. xv.

Beard, *Strauss, Hegel, and their Opinions*, p. 2.

For a striking application of this theory to Theology, see Dorner, *Person of Christ*, Div. II. Vol. III. pp. 145—155.

and inspiration of rationalistic German criticism, if we would obtain a conviction of the hollowness and unreality of its high-sounding professions, we must at least try to understand what it offers to us in place of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And let us remember that this is the last possible phase of idealism. It rejects the theological idealism of Berkeley, the subjective idealism of Fichte, and the objective idealism of Schelling, in order to establish itself. If then we may assume, as the basis and substratum of our impressions, neither the immediate action of the Divine will, nor the human mind, nor the Absolute itself, there remains nothing but either to assume, with Comte, that we cannot discover their substratum, or with Hegel, that they need none; that they are themselves the only existences, subject and object being no more than the forms and conditions of their manifestation. If we reject Hegelianism, there is only another alternative! And if we be not driven to adopt that alternative by the inherent absurdity of absolute idealism, I think we shall be compelled to do so by a glance at its consequences.

In the first place, in spite of Hegel's protest, its conception of God is simply Pantheistic. His own words are¹: "The recognition of God as a spirit implies that He does not remain as a fixed immu-

¹ Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, III. p. 423.

table Infinite encompassing the finite, but enters into it, produces the finite, nature, and the human mind, merely as a limited manifestation of Himself, from which He eternally returns into unity....The true and real existence of spirit therefore is neither in God by Himself, nor in man by himself, but in the God-man; neither in the Infinite alone, nor in the finite alone, but in the interchange of impartation and withdrawal between the two." This is a good specimen of the application of Hegel's theory of the genesis of ideas. According to him the idea of God is the real existence. This idea however before its manifestation exists only potentially. It gains reality by taking the form of its contradiction —the finite (including nature and the human mind). While however it continues in the form of the finite it is only becoming, and it attains full and positive existence only when it has negatived its negation, when it has reabsorbed the finite into itself. This may not be materialistic Pantheism, but it is a Pantheism equally hopeless, and further removed from fact. The materialist says, All things are material, and all things are God. Hegel declares, All things are ideal, and all things are God: equally Pantheistic, he only differs from Comte in the supposed nature of the "all."

We may infer at once from the character of this conclusion that it renders individual immortality

impossible. For since the finite is only a link, perpetually vanishing and reappearing in the endless process by which the Absolute realizes itself, it follows that the independent existence of the human species would be the independent existence of the rational portion of the time-long negation, while the permanence of individuals would be nothing better than the immortality of an inconsiderable fragment of that universal negation, through which, at a given moment, the Absolute is passing into complete and real existence. We can thus understand the exclamation of Strauss¹, that "a life beyond the grave is the last enemy which speculative criticism has to oppose, and if possible to vanquish." It is not difficult either, from this point of view, to comprehend the fanatical destructiveness of many of the new Hegelians. If the idea completes itself through negativating its own negation, we can easily understand that in proportion as a man's character appears to approach the ideal, the disciples of the new philosophy will be eager to complete the ideal by denying that concrete finite life which is its negation. Thus Strauss' ravings about a humanity which is the "God-man," and which "dies, rises, and ascends to heaven," assume an appearance of meaning, and thus Bruno Bauer's naïve claim to constructiveness becomes quite natural, even when

¹ *Glaubenslehre*, II. p. 739.

advanced in such words as these¹: "Let it be remembered that the truly positive can become apparent only when the negation is serious and general... I hope to prove that the most destructive criticism is the only thing to show the creative power of Jesus and His principles."

What kind of criticism was to be expected from men holding such principles as these, and openly professing that they entered on the task of historical and critical examination only for the purpose of illustrating and establishing them? If the course of temporal events be merely the uniform and orderly realization of the idea, then miracles, prophecy, all alleged interferences of the supernatural, are impossible; and the Scriptures which contain accounts of these are unhistorical; indeed, no better than premature and imperfect attempts to disengage the idea from its temporal concealment. As such they must be discredited, in order to make way for the more perfect explanation. To effect this object, not only are all miraculous stories to be summarily rejected, but in other parts of the books which contain them contradictions are to be looked for, and when found or suspected, to be exaggerated and multiplied, till the whole is shown to be valueless, except as a dim symbol of the revelations of Hegelianism, a symbol so dim—a horn-book of

¹ A. T. Saintes's *History of German Rationalism*, p. 304.

the spiritual school so old and so obsolete—that it can only be neglected or cast aside. If it contradicts the philosophical Koran it is false, if it agrees with it, useless! A very cogent argument truly, so long as we believe the Koran, but of small service if we have found this to be obscure and incredible.

But if we refuse to believe the philosophy of Hegel, we must embrace the only alternative which is left to us. It appears that by means of our intellectual faculties we can only discover and apprehend phenomena, impressions, ideas; and if the realities of existence lie beneath these, then we can never intellectually discover those realities. And what in this case are we to do? to sit still in the apathy of baffled despair, or to seek information from One who knows and can teach us more than we could discover? There can be no doubt about what we actually shall do, for the knowledge of reality is what man ever craves, yea, and pursues until he can think no more.

But there is another school of philosophy, which accepting the fact of our inevitable limitation, counsels us to be content therewith. The independent existence of ideas, it exclaims with contempt, is a dream; there is more than we know, but since we cannot discover what it is by our unaided efforts, let us be content with our ignorance, and refuse to think about it at all! This is no exag-

ration. Comte severely rebukes atheists¹ as “the most illogical of theologians,” not because they deny the existence of God, but because they think about God at all, because they do not “put aside all such problems as inaccessible.” This shows clearly that there is an abyss of unbelief lower than speculative atheism. For to an atheist the supposition that there is a God distinct from nature, is at least sufficiently possible to require to be opposed; whereas Comte has so entirely dropped the consideration of the subject, that he can say, apparently without even a feeling of defiance, “the heavens declare no other glory than that of Hipparchus, of Kepler, of Newton, and of all those who have aided in establishing their laws².” No wonder he can add while contemplating this glory of the philosophers, that “modern science permits us easily to conceive a happier arrangement.” But for its horrible blasphemy the grotesqueness of this mad egotism might even provoke a smile. It is due to the English exponent of Comte to say, that he has repudiated the audacious blasphemy of his teacher by declaring that “whatever be the litanies most suitable to his mind, under some form or other, man cannot help worshipping, when under this canopy of the cathedral of immensity. And the least man, gazing upward at the stars, will in the depths of his reverent soul echo the

¹ Comte’s *Philosophy*, Lewes, p. 25.

² *Ibid.* p. 88.

Psalmist's burst, 'The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth His handiwork¹.'

Comte too, strange as it may sound, pronounces religion to be necessary to man, and that moreover "to fulfil its true function religion must first subordinate our existence to an external and irresistible power²." To determine the nature of this power is the office of the intellect in religion,—the expression of that determination is the creed of the future. Since then religion is the key-stone of the social arch, and since there can be no religion without God, how does Comte define the nature of that "external irresistible power" which in the darkness of the theological and metaphysical periods was conceived of under the form of a fetiche, a spirit, or an abstraction. "Humanity," answers Comte, "is the God of the future. It must be conceived of as having an existence apart from, though dependent on, the individual cells of which his organism is composed. This collective life is the *Etre Suprême*, the only one we can know, therefore the only one we can worship." One scarcely knows whether to wonder most at the meanness or obscurity of this conception. The creed of the future was to deliver us from abstractions; and what but an abstraction is a humanity apart from human beings? what but a figment of the imagination is a vast social organism

¹ p. 92.

² p. 340.

united by a positive bond, as real and palpable as that which knits into an organic unity the cells of a human body? Try to represent to yourself the general aspect and character of this "positive" conception; try to gather and condense into the definite features of a living independent being the vast smoke-cloud which this modern investigator has released from its time-long imprisonment. As the gloomy canopy rolls back, concentrates, solidifies, and takes bodily form, what is it which we see towering above us in the crystal sky? Not any single human hero, nor any existing collection of human beings, for it is the whole; an existence not only wide in extent as the world, but long in its succession as human time! And yet on the other hand it can be no mere abstraction; for, according to Comte's definition, it is an external irresistible power, something positive, which depends not on our conceptions, but imposes itself on our reverence, whether we will or no. Besides, according to Comte, it is only the species which lives, the individual dies, and therefore the races of the past are no more than a bygone dream; they can no more form part of the actual humanity than its vanished cells form any part of the real body. The present indeed may have inherited the thoughts of the past, but it is that present only which embodies them as a positive external power. What then, after all, is this

miserable God? It surely cannot be the many-headed multitude, the vast concourse of the existing human family, the illimitable mob of good and bad, of wise and ignorant, of men in all conceivable stages of development—theological, metaphysical, and positive—the million worshippers of fetiche, the thousand fanatics of abstraction, mingled in one indiscriminate company, with the little knot of enlightened sages! Will the great hierarch of the ultimate religion—will M. Comte himself fall down and worship before the multitudes whose theological ignorance it was his office to enlighten? This were to stultify himself, and to give the lie to his own philosophy: this were to consecrate the right of free discussion, the permanence of individual equality, and the divine right of the sovereignty of peoples—dogmas against which Comte protests with all his strength as the fatal obstacle to all social order, as condemning (to use his own words) “all superiors to an arbitrary dependence on the multitude of inferiors.”

Who, as he threads his way through this weary round of contradictions, would not exclaim with the illustrious Niebuhr¹: “As for that Christianity, which

¹ Neander's *Life of Christ*, p. xx. For a faithful representation of some of the results of the so-called Positive Philosophy, see Kalisch, *Genesis*, p. 36: “It cannot be surprising that such premises led to the most monstrous conclusions; that a school has been formed

is such according to the fashion of the modern philosophers and pantheists, without a personal God, without immortality, without an individuality of man, without historical faith—it may be a very ingenious and subtle philosophy, but it is no Chris-

which not only renewed the system of the heathen Epicureans, but carried it out in its most revolting consequences; that it is most clamorously asserted that the world was formed through itself by atoms, or “monads,” working upon each other by the aid of chance; that man is a developed animal; his thoughts are the product of oxidised coal and phosphorescent fat; his will depends on the swelling of the fibres, and the contact of the different substances of the brain; and his sentiments are the movements of the electric currents in the nerves; that the notions of God, soul, virtue, conscience, immortality, and the like, are illusory products of the changes of matter in the brain; crime and murder are the consequences of a deception, and of the dislocation of a brain-fibre;—so that malefactors must be sent to hospitals and asylums, and not to prisons and workhouses; the judge is to be entirely superseded by the physician; theft and calumny and fraud do not come before the tribunal of morality, but are to be cured by physic and medicines; and even murder is no atrocious crime, but an unhappy mistake, which it would be absurd and cruel to visit with punishment. In such perversion of notions we must tremble for the safety of society. The very essence and nature of man are denied; and his consciousness itself is declared a phantom and a dream! The happiness of man, and the order of the universe, are crushed in one vast and fearful ruin. Every sympathetic feeling is a weakness, and all enthusiasm is infatuation; hope and faith are the offspring of credulous indolence; and soon, alas! love will follow into the same awful abyss!” In view of such doctrines as these, is it not time to rebuke that audacious and impious spirit which dares to resolve all things into a dreary and purposeless conflict of material forces, guided by the fortuitous caprices of accident, or constrained by the iron bond of an inexorable and unconscious fate?

tianity at all. Again and again have I said, that I know not what to do with a metaphysical God, and that I will have no other but the God of the Bible who is heart to heart." What is the light of the knowledge of that God, as seen in the face of Jesus Christ, it will be one object of my subsequent discourses to display; but meantime, and always, it is of the utmost importance to remember that we have surveyed the last possible efforts of unassisted human intellect to solve the problem of existence. By means of the intellect we can only discover and apprehend phenomena, and therefore if we lose the God of the Bible, who speaks to us heart to heart through the blessed story of Redemption, we must either hold with Hegel, that nothing exists except ideas, or with Comte, that we can never know what exists, and must be content with our ignorance. This is the end of philosophy—this is the goal to which the spirit of the age is urging us! When the deceitful haze of great swelling words is cleared away, this is what we see before us: not a constant and endless progression towards the fullest and most transcendent knowledge of the Deity, but an abrupt and final halt at the brink of a precipice—at the brink of a dark and bridgeless abyss, void and desolate, with no living spirit in its depths, and no bow of hope in its sky. Never was the alternative so clearly and sharply defined as in our own day; never

was the opposition to Christ so direct and fearless. We can discern more and more plainly the fated forms of the Apocalyptic vision, the beast-like lawless force, and the lamb-like godless wisdom of the great apostasy; and we can hear more and more distinctly their loud defiant challenge to the King of kings. For good or evil it is plainly the crisis of the Church's fortunes, the beginning of the last battle of the age-long war. The forces of Christ and antichrist are drawn up within sight of each other; the hostile camp-fires blaze on every eminence of art and science, of literature and politics. The end cannot be far off, and of the nature of that end, the Christian, knowing as he does the character of the issue and of the combatants, cannot be for a moment doubtful. He cannot believe that God made the world, that God has been guiding it through the course of all the ages, only to bring it at length to the chaos of darkness and despair; and moreover he sees the awful symbols of the Apocalypse blazing over the future of wickedness, like the letters of fire on the walls of the fated king! But his strong confidence is in the words of the Lord his Redeemer! Above the din and discord of the battle he hears ever the claim, the bidding, the promise, of his King.

The claim, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Others may have usurped the Lord's

right, in appearance and for a season, in this or the other province of creation; but yet in the counsels of His Father, through all the boundless field of Divine activity, far as the heavens stretch infinite away, beyond the reach of sight or soul, beyond the illimitable bounds where thought itself grows faint and dizzy with its flight, the Lord is King: not only power, but "all" power, is given to Him! Again, behind this glittering show of sense and time there is an inner world, an eternal mode of being which sense cannot recognize, which space cannot measure —the spiritual world, the inner sanctuary of creation, the holy of holies, where glows behind the covering veil of time the essential glory of God. And there too, in that inner sphere, throned above angels and archangels, and all of inconceivably august amongst the endless order of those spiritual throngs, those morning stars of the eternal firmament, the Lord is King: not only power, but all power, is given to Him.

This is our Master's rightful claim, and on it He bases His command; go ye therefore, and give it effect. Go forth into all the earth, and without fear or afterthought, without measuring forces or calculating results, attack at once every enemy of your Lord. Do this, not because you are equal to the battle, but because there moves before you, behind you, and around you, the unseen Almighty presence

of the glorified Son of God; because this goes before you like a consuming fire, because it shall dwell within you as a resistless energy; because it shall envelope and encircle you with a wall of impenetrable flame, like that flashing sword which kept the gate of Paradise, or like those chariots and horses of fire which blazed on the hills of Dothan round about Elisha!

This is the Lord's promise to His struggling Church, militant here below; yea, this is the power by which He has made it possible for her hitherto, and so far as we see it done, to obey His command and justify his declaration.

And this promise, this power is for each of us, to inspire us with holy courage, with uncompromising faithfulness, with long-suffering patience, and love. And it shall continue ours, yea, it shall continue the possession of Christ's earthly bride, through all the weary conflict, even to the end. For according to His promise He is with us "always," on every day, and in every way, even till the world ends; through all the time which is yet to be, so long as the earth has still its days and nights, until His own great day. And then, when the end has come, and time has passed into eternity, the Lord will no longer need to promise, "Lo, I am with you," for then we shall be with Him, "seeing Him as He is, and knowing even as also we are known."

LECTURE II.

ROMANS IX. 5.

Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever.

LAST Sunday, with the view of pointing out how solemn were the issues of present controversies, I endeavoured to indicate to you the present position and inevitable end of what has been called rational Christianity. Incidentally, however, we were enabled to see how vainly philosophy had laboured to solve the problem of existence, and more especially to conceive the true nature of the union which subsists between God and man. Rejecting as unphilosophical that frigid Deism which sets the Infinite over against the finite as something distinct and foreign to it, Hegel and Comte are alike compelled to take refuge in Pantheism, and thus to contradict our fundamental conviction, that we possess a personality, which as it is distinct and real in the pre-

sent, is also destined to permanence after the change which we call death. The alternative which thus seems to be presented is this, that if we attempt to solve the problem of existence by the light of reason alone, we are either driven to premise an untenable hypothesis with respect to the nature of God, or to embrace an impossible conclusion as to the nature and destiny of man. In this difficulty we are met by the declaration of Revelation, that God is neither to be banished from creation nor confused with it; that while the distinctions of personality in the Divine essence permit us to conceive of an eternal activity in the Godhead apart from creation, to conceive, in other words, a mode of existence in God which is loftier and more divine than the mere physical procession of the world-spirit; on the other hand, the spectacle of God coming into manifestation through the Incarnation, and of all which led to and resulted from it, affects us irresistibly with the impression that this great God who is exalted so high above all blessing and praise, is at the same time the Father of our Spirits, in whom we live and move and have our being, yea, and without whom not even a sparrow falls to the ground. And thus if we had no other object than to build up for ourselves a temple of truth in which we might live and worship, in the outer darkness of this night of unbelief, we should feel it necessary to realize as distinctly as possible

the positive contents of this revelation. But there is also another reason for such a course, and a reason which is furnished by the peculiar circumstances of our own days. Moved thereto by such objections as I noticed last Sunday, devout men are asking themselves more carefully than hitherto what is the meaning of the word Inspiration; in what sense and to what extent did the Spirit of God illuminate the minds of those chosen men who spoke or recorded the words of Holy Scripture. This, it is true, is a question which has often been asked in the course of the Christian centuries, but, partly owing to the restrictions on free speech, and partly to the undeveloped condition of critical and historical science, it was never put with such clearness and importunity, and never considered so fully and freely as now. It has thus happened, as was indeed inevitable, that there is a greater apparent divergence of opinion on this subject than ever before, and (as perhaps was also inevitable) that, in challenging or supporting the claims of a theory of mechanical inspiration, appeal has been made to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such an appeal must of course ultimately force us back upon the consideration of the doctrine of the Lord's Person; and complaints have already been heard that, while much attention has been bestowed upon such books as the *Essays and Reviews* from the historical or critical

point of view, of theological criticism¹ “there has been hardly any at all.”

Such criticism however must evidently raise at once such questions as these,¹ “Is the hypothesis of a limitation in our Saviour’s human knowledge consistent with the doctrine of His Divinity?” If this question should be answered in the affirmative,² Is such an hypothesis further consistent with the doctrine of His human sinlessness? And again, should both these positions be affirmed,³ Can we point out the spiritual direction in which such limitation is to be expected? I shall endeavour to answer these questions in my remaining lectures.

It is too late to object to such an investigation, that to introduce questions as to the Lord’s Person into a passing controversy is to bring the ark of God into the camp. It has been already brought thither, and by no unhallowed hands; for if on the one side Bishop Thirlwall² insists that “a great part of the events related in the Old Testament (our Lord’s general sanction of it notwithstanding) has no more apparent connection with our religion than those of Greek and Roman history,” another eminent prelate recently asserted from this place³ that “to cast discredit upon these books, or upon any portion of

¹ *Charge of the Bishop of St David's*, 1863, p. 98.

² *Ibid.* p. 123.

³ *Foundation Truths*, Bishop Perry, p. 15.

them, would be to impute either ignorance or falsehood to the Redeemer." And again, yet more decisively, "We cannot but regard Christianity as answerable with its life...for the veracity of the statements and the soundness of the moral doctrine contained in it." Now, whatever we may think as to the possibility of reconciling such statements, it is clear that they do bring the ark of our faith into the field of battle; and that all which in these circumstances it remains for us to do is to defend it there.

There are some however who are disposed to take quite another view of this proceeding; who think that, in the investigations to which the oppositions of unbelief have driven her, the Church is permanently advancing to another camping ground, and that since she has struck her tents, and is actually moving onward, it is necessary that the ark of God should go before to find out for her the next appointed resting-place on her pilgrimage to truth. Thus, with a noble confidence, Dorner exclaims, in the preface to his great work *On the Person of Christ*¹, "It is well for both, in the great conflict between the mighty powers of Christianity and reason, when the struggle is ever more and more concentrated on the point where all is ultimately to be won or lost. This is well for Christianity, not

¹ Dorner, *On the Person of Christ*, Vol. I. p. vii.

because, driven from so many positions, otherwise esteemed essential, she, as it were, has to call forth her very last forces for the protection of the Person of her Chief; but rather because this Person alone, as the central point of the whole, is able to determine the positions which may and must be maintained." It is well too for philosophy; "it is salutary for her to know from what position the Christian theology cannot depart before she extends the hand to her. Otherwise it is only an untrue, precipitate reconciliation that can be effected—a reconciliation which will soon be dissolved again, and which tends but to hinder the ultimate agreement." It may seem to many that this is to take too hopeful a view of the future, that the contradictions of our time are so direct, the divergencies of opinion so wide, that to look for the restoration of anything like concurrence of belief is to hope against the fiat of experience. But glance backward for a moment at the violent contests of those stormy centuries through which the Church has advanced to a fuller realization of the contents of the Word of God; and as you watch the ebb and flow of the age-long conflict, its crises of apparently hopeless anarchy and disorganization, its sudden turns of fortune, and above all its constant witness that there is One within the veil who is wont to come out of His place when the Church's affairs are most entangled

and disastrous, and you will be disposed, I think, to agree with the remark with which Dorner finishes his general review of it, that "at no time has a problem been proposed to Christianity which she has not, though amid the conflict of the sharpest antagonisms, been able to solve¹."

The objection may indeed be suggested, that, though this statement might be true of ruder and less cultivated times, it by no means follows that Christianity will be able to resolve the difficulties of an age like ours. But let it be remembered that it is not the real knowledge of this age—its knowledge viz. of the connection of phenomena—which will ultimately stand over against Christianity. A man may have enriched himself with all the spoils of modern science, and yet never feel for a moment (except as he is made so to feel by false and unscriptural representations) that there is a shadow of opposition between his reason and his faith. That which opposes Christianity is the barren and unscientific ontology which we reviewed last week, which pretends to know the unknowable, and to measure the Infinite with a finite line. And of such "gnosis" I will venture to say, that any one who will carefully and patiently compare it with that Gnosticism which (growing out of the ancient philosophies) confronted Christianity in the first two Christian centuries, will

¹ Dorner, Vol. I. p. 75.

be astonished in how many points the two systems agree, not only in their essential principles, but even in their outward form. Strauss but repeats the blasphemy of Carpocrates, when he places Jesus¹ "in the Chapel of Alexander Severus by the side of Orpheus and Homer.....where He ought not to disdain the company of Alexander and Cæsar, of Raphael and Mozart;" for the earlier heretic declared that Christ was no more than a religious genius, erecting a statue to Him² "along with Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle." Again, in a vision described in the Gnostic gospel of Eve³, we have a clear enunciation, in words which might have been uttered by Fichte, of that principle (viz. the identity of subject and object) out of which all German idealism has been developed. What wonder then that not only Baur but Renan should consider Ebionism the original form of Christianity, and seek its gospel in the Pseudo-Clementine homilies !

Who can remark the closeness of this analogy, and not take courage from the fact, that Gnosticism, so far from ultimately injuring Christianity, did but bring into the Church to be discriminated, and in part appropriated, whatever had been strong and great in the culture of the later Jewish and heathen

¹ Beard, *Strauss, Hegel, &c.* p. 46.

² Dorner, Vol. I. p. 186.

³ Dorner, Vol. I. p. 248.

world, forcing thus upon the conviction of all, that this which could thus regally judge and discriminate, was itself the absolute religion which might be judged of none.

In our time there is again a great movement of the deep waters of rational speculation, and again men are bearing into the bosom of the Christian Church all the spoils of thought and discovery, to lay them over against the revealed truth of God. It is a searching trial, and the question is again asked, by some in arrogant, by others in doubtful, even in sorrowful tones, Is this the absolute religion after all? Now let us learn from the past not to be impatient. These systems of truth must be suffered to lie side by side till men have well contemplated them, till they have examined them on every side, and are satisfied as to their relative claims. And, if we may judge from the past, this process will not be completed in a year nor even in an age. Neither will its result be such as the impatient are prone to expect, for, if the experience of the past is to be repeated, Christianity, while rejecting much, will also not fail to absorb something from the modern cultus which challenges it.

Let it be recognized, moreover, that such periodic comparisons are rendered inevitable by the claim of Christianity to be the absolute religion. It was this claim which made a death-wrestle with the ancient

philosophy inevitable, and which again, at the great birth-time of the European intellect, provoked that mystical and scholastic speculation which prepared for the decisive advance of the Reformation. This fact is scarcely less manifest in the history of the latter period than in that of the former: In opening their eyes to the true character of the ancient superstition, men naturally became dissatisfied with what they thought to be Christianity. The Church was infallible, if she might be believed, and yet she told them things, as to the means of obtaining and dispensing the Divine favour, which in the light of awakened conscience were plainly incredible. In these circumstances the mind must try if it could not find for itself some better way. And thus again, in the sceptical mockeries of Abelard, the ecstatic contemplation of Ruysbroek, and the pantheistic mysticism of Master Eckart¹, we catch the faithful echoes of the ancient Gnosticism, the familiar tokens that, by exhausting efforts to break down the rock-barriers of the finite, the mind is again convincing itself of its own speculative impotence. Still all this effort had its use. For while men were seeking earnestly for a better forgiveness than could be purchased by the price of an indulgence, for a more real communion with God than could be effected through

¹ Ullmann's *Reformers before the Reformation*, Vol. II. Part I. Chap. II. and III.

the manipulation of a rosary, yea, and were discovering that with all their efforts they could not find what they sought, the Reformers were driven on, by the urgent impulsion of the universal need, to a more living acquaintance with the Word of Life, and were thence enabled to convince the world once more, that if not Romanism, yet at least Christianity was the absolute religion.

The human mind has again in our time made a vast advance in the acquisition of secular knowledge. Within the experience of little more than a single generation, sciences have been created of which our forefathers knew not even the name. In the slow building of continents, in the flash of the electric current, in the secret processes of animal and vegetable life, our contemporaries have discovered modes of the Divine activity which former ages had never suspected. And, in the intoxication of these large and sudden acquisitions, it is perhaps scarcely to be wondered that we discern at times something of the self-complacency of the parvenu.

Still it must be confessed that science has some ground of complaint, for in the confident joyousness of its prosperity it has found itself confronted, if not by an infallible Church, at least apparently by an infallible Book, which, according to the assertions of the many who understood it least, was to be regarded as an authoritative exposition not only of spiritual

but also of physical truth. As before, this was felt to be impossible, and too many, in the rashness and bitterness of disappointed pride, determined to seek the higher truth for themselves. Again the old processes, the familiar mockeries, mysticism, pantheism; and again the sense of cruel limitation, the hopelessness, the bitterness of baffled enthusiasm. It is the world bringing its culture into the Church again, to be again vanquished and blessed, to have its arrogance rebuked, its truth consecrated; yea, and by the grace of God its faith re-established in the absolute religion and the glorified God-Man. I am persuaded, my brethren, that the problem proposed to us is of far less intrinsic difficulty than some of those which have already met with their solution. All which we need as defenders of the faith, but yet this is much, is the spirit of truth, of patience, and of love; the spirit which can look for the truth of God even in the accusations of an enemy, which can wait in perplexity till Christ shall make the light to spring out of darkness, which can meekly bear to be defeated, and only find fresh strength in the sense of its own weakness; which will not withhold its little light from the common stock, because its feeble glimmer may expose the light-bearer to scorn; which will say nothing but the truth for any bribe which the world can offer, which can be prevented from telling all the truth by no punishment which the

world can threaten, and, best of all, which can trust Christ above wisdom and learning and self, seeking that light from the gift of the Light essential, which it cannot find in the schools nor in the busy concourse of men !

Having thus indicated what I believe to be the probable issue of such investigations as those which the progress of the age is compelling us to undertake, let me now proceed more closely to that particular branch of it which is our more special subject for to-day, and which I have already indicated thus: “How far is the hypothesis of the limitation of our Saviour’s human nature (and especially therein of His knowledge) consistent with the doctrine of His Divinity?” This question will of course prescribe the form of our investigation; for we have to determine not whether the doctrine of the Trinity is agreeable to Scripture, but rather, assuming this position to be affirmed, how far we have definite ideas about the Divine nature and Personality of Jesus; for (because we cannot tell what possibilities may be admitted by that which is unknown) only so far can the Church doctrine about our Saviour’s divinity interfere with the supposition of His human limitation.

We are taught then by the Church to affirm, 1st, that Jesus Christ is very God; 2ndly, that Jesus Christ is very man; and 3rdly, that He is not two,

but one Christ. Now it is at once objected to these statements that the two former, taken together, contradict the third. That since in two rational natures there must needs be two distinct wills, and two distinct understandings, and since, moreover, as Schleiermacher insists¹, the will and understanding constitute the personality, it follows that the assumption of two natures implies two personalities. This conclusion, urges Schleiermacher, seems to be inevitable, unless indeed we suppose, as would appear to be probable, that the Infinite will overpowers and, so to speak, extinguishes the other. But then it is difficult to understand how the absolute quiescence of the human will and intelligence are not tantamount to their withdrawal; while at the same time it is impossible to admit the only other apparent solution of the difficulty, viz. that the Divine and human wills in Jesus had a common object², "for that would constitute a moral union of distinct personalities, not a metaphysical unity of person."

Now the Church answers these and all similar objections by pointing out that they are simply built (as objections so commonly are) upon an ambiguity in the meaning of a word; upon the supposition, namely, that she means by the word Personality, as used in reference to the Incarnation of our

¹ Strauss's *Life of Jesus*, Vol. III. p. 411.

² *Westminster Review*, October, 1864, p. 470, &c.

Lord, what is ordinarily meant by it in its application to men. In the latter case, the word person is generally defined as representing "a free intelligent being, possessing a single centre of self-determination, and conscious of its own identity under every variety of external circumstances." If the Church means this by the word "Person," undoubtedly the objections which have been noticed are valid, and moreover unanswerable. But she does not. When speaking of the Personality of Jesus Christ, the Church means "the synthesis of two distinct natures; that in which the Divine and human natures of the Redeemer find the real ground of their union." If now it be objected that this definition does not agree with the former, the Church replies that she never intended that it should, that in laying it down she intended to describe something very different from an ordinary human personality, and therefore that it is a mere waste of ingenuity to prove those things inconsistent which she designedly made so.

But why constitute such an ambiguity, it may be asked,—why use a well-known word in an unusual meaning? From the necessity of the case; because the fact to be described is unique and incomprehensible, and because, therefore, (since all words are used in the first place to describe something within the range of human experience,) it would have been

impossible to select any word which would not have borne an ambiguous meaning. Well, it may be replied, if you have removed the formal difficulty, you have only done so by suggesting a substantial, and therefore a far more formidable one. If we have been mistaken in your meaning, What is it that you now mean by the synthesis of two distinct natures? What is that mysterious ground in which these find their connexion? This, in other words, is a demand that we shall bring within the reach of the finite mind, by means of some comprehensible illustration, that which by its very nature is beyond our comprehension. And what if we do not,—if we cannot? Will the objector thence conclude that what he cannot be made to understand does not therefore exist? Only can he do so by assuming the utterly ridiculous position that his knowledge is the measure of existence. That, in short, which alone could justify the rejection of the doctrine of the Incarnation on account of the form of its statement, would be the demonstration that that statement affirmed an impossibility. But how can you prove that to be impossible which you do not understand? It were easy to suggest inexplicable difficulties in reference to the statement that we were made by God, or that “in Him we live and move and have our being.” For who can understand how human freedom and responsibility are

consistent with the truth that God gave to each his fundamental tendencies and instincts, and moreover that He appointed all the external circumstances under which those tendencies should be developed? How far, for instance, is the child of a thief responsible for his evil tendencies, when he was born with all the wild passions of his parents, and breathed moreover the poisoned air of vice and temptation from the hour of his birth to that of his death? How was he responsible? in what conceivable sense could he be said "to live, and move, and have his being in God"? And yet in some sense he had, for to exclude the Infinite even from one corner of creation is to impose on Him limitation and deny His infinity: in some sense too the wretched child of vice was responsible, for to take away from him all will is to make him less than human. We cannot comprehend these things, but are we therefore, with the selfish impatience of an overweening conceit, to deny their existence? In that case, what is there in all the earth and all the heavens which we must not deny? Suppose we admit the most materialistic theory of life, do we then understand life? Lewes acknowledges¹ that if we admit the positivist theory that "life is an evolution, not a creation, and is thus essentially connected with the great life of the universe, that even then no thinking

¹ Comte, p. 160.

man will imagine that anything is explained by this. The great mystery of life and being remains as inaccessible as ever." In fact, all we do by the adoption of this theory is to alter our conception of the mode in which successive species came into existence. Instead of conceiving that the long line of physical, chemical, and vital metamorphoses, exists in the form of a cable which grew by the addition of new threads at definite intervals, we have to conceive that the growth was effected insensibly by the gradual development of those threads which existed at the beginning; but what the vast coil of creation is, or how it was developed, this is, and must ever continue to be, beyond the reach of our unassisted vision. We cannot understand life; nay, on the same disinterested testimony¹, we cannot even understand our own perceptions. "No amount of ingenuity," says Lewes, "will make an impression transmitted along a nerve, either by mechanical vibrations, or by fluids of the most mysterious quality, into a perception (viz. a recognition, or taking hold by the mind of the meaning of the impression), which remains at once the essential fact and eternal mystery." What then shall we believe, if we reject all which we cannot understand? We must needs end in an abject nihilism which denies that there

¹ Comte's *Philosophy*, p. 215.

is either God, or world, or man, object or subject, universe or self!

But in truth, if we may believe another class of objectors, the idea of the God-man is by no means so incomprehensible as Socinians have declared, for it is held by the followers of Hegel¹ that "the human mind unknowingly and instinctively framed by anticipation the dogmas of the fall, original sin, the Trinity and the God-man, as a sort of popular expression of the Hegelian doctrines." If then the doctrine of the Incarnation is at present so inconceivable, how is it that at one time it appeared so natural? A celebrated author has maintained that the errors of Romanism have their origin in human nature; what would have been thought, if he had argued thence, not that those doctrines were the product of corrupt tendencies, or the perversion of normal tendencies of the human mind, but that they were so utterly mysterious and incomprehensible as to be out of the sphere as well of human interest as of human knowledge? The latter class of objectors might be fairly left to answer the former!

But however this may be, it will now I trust be perfectly apparent that while confessing that great is that "mystery of godliness," of which the basis is "God manifest in the flesh," the Church can no more justly be charged with credulity for believing

¹ Beard's *Strauss, Hegel, &c.* p. 30.

it than she can fairly be charged with inconsistency for endeavouring to represent that mystery by the word which seemed to her most adequately to suggest and illustrate it.

And this last remark may suggest to us the actual history of the adoption of the Church's terminology. It is true that such phrases as "Person," "Son of God," and "Eternal Filiation," at least in their technical signification, were originally proposed by theologians during the great controversies of the first five centuries. But they are not to be looked upon as having only the authority of those who first suggested them, for these words came into existence after the manner of proverbs. Out of many proverbial sayings which are set afloat, some are seized upon by the general community as peculiarly true or valuable, and so by their very permanence carry the authority of public approval. Now in the earliest ages the Church held the deposit of revealed truth only as an undeveloped totality. The truth had indeed really moulded the Christian heart, and produced the general tone of Christian feeling, but it had not yet been placed as a definite object before the understanding. As soon however as it was stated by any rash speculator in an erroneous form, the Church felt at once that this was not the truth which she held in her heart, and, as a counteractive, she sought eagerly for a more exact descrip-

tion of it. The great theologians of the earlier ages did their best, under the guidance of the Spirit, to supply that want; and whenever they were enabled to utter the Church's conviction on any controverted point in a form which commended itself as sufficient to what Dorner has beautifully called¹ "the faith-conscience" of the community, that form was at once felt to be the one which they had been so long vainly seeking, and thus the very form to be passed on, with the stamp of the Church's approval, as a permanent possession for future ages. Thus when in the midst of the Patripassian controversy Tertullian decisively adopted the title "Son of God" instead of "Logos",² the Church felt at once that he had expressed the distinction which it wished to make, not merely between God and his reason, which might be only a distinction between substance and attribute, but between Person and Person, between Father and Son. Thenceforward therefore the phrase was technically adopted. The most decisive proof however that this was the method of terminological genesis is furnished in the introduction by Origen of the phrase "Eternal Filiation." The Church had long sought in vain for a positive statement of its faith which should not less exclude the frigid Deism of the Judaizing gnosis on the one hand, than the unworthy Pantheism of the Gentile

¹ Vol. I. p. 46.

² Dorner, Vol. II. p. 79.

gnosis on the other, and it felt at once that in this phrase of Origen, which represented God's highest activity as taking place within the sphere of His own Being, it might shut out for ever that immoral Pantheism which seemed necessarily to arise from placing God's activity over against the creation alone; while at the same time it excluded that cold and narrow-hearted Deism which banished God from an impure world into a dark and awful solitude. That this was the real ground upon which this phrase was adopted is manifest from this, that while its author's¹ "doctrine of the eternity of creation and much else found no recognition, that of the eternal generation of the Son, on the contrary, attained through its own weight the position of a corner-stone in the doctrinal edifice of the Church,... and became even a standard for the judgment of other parts of Origen's system which did not seem to harmonize with it."

I think that it is wellnigh impossible in these days to exaggerate the importance of the fact just suggested, for it teaches us to see in those apparently cold and repulsive formulæ of the creeds the warm living utterance of the Christian heart; it teaches us that if, instead of turning away from these dogmas disdainfully, as though they were mere antiquated abstractions, we would be at the pains

¹ Dorner, Vol. II. p. 114.

to enquire into their history and adoption, we should find ourselves placed in contact with the warmest emotions of a struggling faith; yea, and brought into the full view of the Christian solutions of those very difficulties which harass our own!

It is continually urged, if the Church does not fully understand the mysterious ground of the two natures in her Incarnate Lord, why does she speak about it, give it a name, and make it an object of thought and speculation? Why is it not enough to say simply that Christ is God and Man, and that, though we know not how this may be, we are content to believe the mystery because it is revealed to us in the Bible, and because it meets and satisfies the deepest wants of our heart? Why do we depart from the richer and simpler and more spiritual language of Holy Scripture, thus losing the emotional appeal of our representations, while we weary ourselves to express the inexpressible with dialectical formality and precision? It would doubtless be sufficient to answer with Dr Mill,—Because we have been compelled to do so by the upgrowth of error and heresy. For¹, “whatever might be the happiness, doubtless in itself a great one, of being able to dwell on the exalted mysteries of the Gospel without the deadening feeling suggested by a consciousness of opposed opinions, however great might be its

¹ Mill's *Sermons on the Temptation of our Lord*.

advantage in the less constrained and technical cast of language, the freedom from the necessity even of appearing, as in these sad times, to be setting one truth of religion as it were in opposition to another, that happiness and advantage can never be ours."

For not only have definite heresies arisen on the subject of the Incarnation in ages long since past, but those errors are continually reappearing in our own, and¹ "nothing can be more delusive than the imagination that through ignoring the matter by indifference, and equilibrium of mind between the Catholic proposition on this truth and its opposite, we are imitating the happy primitive believers who preceded the agitation of the question." It were a sufficient answer to the general objection against dogma, to urge thus its unwelcome necessity. But, as I have hinted, I would go further than this, and remark with gratitude that in losing the serenity of an undisturbed but undeveloped intuition of the faith, the Church has gained as well as lost. She is actually nearer to the comprehension of the truth, and therefore actually further removed from the danger of those abnormal spiritual developments which arise from its misapprehension, than was the Church of the primitive but post-Apostolic age. What the heretics put forth in formal propositions, were just those thoughts which would arise sponta-

¹ Mill's *Sermons on the Temptation of our Lord*.

neously in the human mind in virtue of its instinctive desire to reduce every object of thought to a form which should be comprehensible. Thus if the errors had never been published, it is certain that they would have been thought, and that the more extensively, as the Church extended her conquests over heathen races, to which such errors had been long habitual. Was it then no advantage to take these possible and therefore inevitable errors one after another, and definitely exclude them? Are we not coming nearer to the truth, as we successively eliminate every conception which can conflict with it? Do we not place the mind in a more favourable position for attaining the goal of truth, when, by successively stopping up every bye-path of error into which it might stray, we leave it on that road which will lead it at least in the right direction, and conduct it as far towards the end as it may be possible for it to advance? And is not this, moreover, when deeply considered, as advantageous in a spiritual as in an intellectual point of view. If it be undeniable that our emotions faithfully respond to the appeal of the object presented to them, and if this law holds good nowhere so universally as in the sphere of religion, and in connection with representations of the nature of God; if therefore for our spiritual health it is as necessary for us to set up no false spiritual idol before the eyes of our soul, as it was for the

Israelites in a ruder age to present no graven image to their bodily sight, are we no better spiritually for the casting down of those intellectual idols which it is natural to us to make? Take as an illustration the successive steps through which the Church has approximated to the understanding of her Lord's humanity. Two errors were possible, and therefore two became actual, on the nature of the Lord's humanity. It might be denied altogether as by the Docetæ, or confounded with the Divinity as by Arius and Apollinaris. The former error is so far removed from the circle of modern thought that it may be sufficient to have stated it, but the latter (especially in the form which it assumed among the Apollinarians) resembles so strikingly one into which good men are tempted to fall in these days, that it may not be unprofitable to describe it more particularly. Apollinaris (a man equally distinguished for wisdom and piety, devoted to the Church, and a personal friend of Athanasius), in his zeal against the Arians, and his desire to give distinctness and comprehensibility to the orthodox faith, was led to assert that the Eternal Word at His Incarnation took nothing but the flesh of humanity,—its body, and animal soul,—while His Divine Nature supplied the place of a rational spirit. The temptation to this error lies upon the very surface; its adoption would dispel so many obscurities. For Apollinaris there could be no

difficult question about human frailty and human limitation. Bodily weakness indeed was left, and bodily suffering, but every one of our Lord's spiritual and intellectual acts was attributed not to his human spirit, either in whole or in part (for human spirit He had none), but directly to the Immanent Deity. This made all very intelligible, no doubt, and would have been as valuable as it was definite, if it had been the object of investigation to frame an intelligible theory, and not to explain a transcendent fact. But where was the use of it, if it did not correspond to the reality, if Scripture asserted, and the human heart required, a Saviour who was very man as well as very God, a Saviour who could redeem the human soul as well as the human body?

And is it useless in the present day to call attention to this mistake of a good man, when so many are shrinking back from the thought of our Saviour's real limitation in knowledge and His real growth in wisdom, because they find it difficult to entertain these thoughts by the side of His Omniscience? Is it not well to remind such, yea, to remind ourselves, that this reluctance arises from the rationalistic tendency to reject what we cannot understand, that it proves we are not catholic at heart, and have not as yet brought down every high imagination to the obedience of Christ?

When the Church insisted, in opposition to

Apollinaris, that we must hold the reality and completeness of our Saviour's humanity, of course the question was stirred,—How can this be thought, in consistency with the doctrine of the Unity of His Person? Illustrations and explanations have been offered in reply to the question from that day to this, and, as I have intimated before, it is not well to underrate the value of these; for as each was found inadequate it brought the Church at least a step nearer towards the truth. Beginning with such physical analogies as that of glowing iron, used by Theodoret¹, we see that these are inadequate because they merely represent a union of things of the same nature; and though this source of obscurity is removed in the figure of the union of soul and body, yet the difficulty still remains that while in this latter illustration we have represented only a union of natures which are both the subjects of development, in our Lord's Person there is the union of a human nature which is the subject of progressive development, with a Divine nature which is not. We might perhaps construct an illustration which should be closer. Thus, if a light be placed within the enclosure of a semi-transparent globe, the amount of illumination will depend not only on the brilliance of the light within, but also on the density of the medium through which its rays must struggle. And if we

¹ Nitsch; *System*, p. 257.

can now conceive that the semi-opaque enclosure becomes an organic circle, which as it develops throws off film after film of its opaquer husk, growing all the while more transparent by its successive attenuations, we shall have a rude and, though unworthy, not very inadequate representation of the form in which the expanding and refining humanity of the Child Jesus grew ever more translucent of the glory of Immanent Godhead. This however is only an illustration of the outer form, not of the inner mystery. It represents the effect, the continually brightening manifestation of an element which continues invariable, but it does not exhibit the cause, viz. that the development of the outward organ is made possible through its organic connexion with the Inner Light. Perhaps the illustration which is most adequate and suggestive is that which is furnished by the creaturely and redemptive union between the ordinary human nature and the Divine. By nature we live and move and have our being in God. But through sin this union has been impaired, and it is the great end of salvation not only to restore but to complete it through the vital union of the soul with Christ. Thus, in a certain sense, salvation is a *θεοποίησις*, for, as St Peter says, we are "made partakers of the Divine Nature;" we are made "to drink into one Spirit," so that the living Christian can say with St Paul, not in a mere figure of

speech, but out of his own consciousness of the blessed and inexplicable fact, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

It is true that in us there can never be, as in Christ, the union of two whole and perfect natures, but still it remains certain that even now, and in us, the whole and perfect nature of man is really made to partake in Christ of the nature of God ; yea, and a day is coming when, without a shadow of Pantheistic confusion, God, according to the grand declaration of St Paul, shall be all things in all.

I pass over the recent attempts of Dorner and other Lutheran divines to conceive the manner in which it is abstractedly possible for the two natures to co-exist in a single person, not because I think those attempts fruitless, but because I have not space to make them intelligible¹. The utmost however that can be done by any kind of illustration is to point out the true direction of thought; its object, that Christ is very God and at the same time very man, must ever remain a mystery. The Church does not profess to understand it, she believes it because it is revealed and because her very life is involved in its certainty.

We must believe in our Lord’s real humanity, that as concerning the flesh He came of the tribe of

¹ See Sermon IV. and Dorner, *Person of Christ*, Div. II. Vol. III. pp. 248—260.

Judah, for if the Omniscience and Omnipotence of His Divine nature exclude the ignorance and weakness of His human nature, then this latter was never really limited, was never a reality at all, but only, as the Docetæ held, a mere shadow or apparition; then too the Scriptural representations of His growth in wisdom, and of His being made perfect through suffering, are merely delusive suggestions, fraudulently invented to bring the Redeemer nearer to our heart, and to persuade us, contrary to the fact, that we have an High Priest who can be really touched by the feeling of our infirmities.

Again, it is not less necessary to believe the Saviour's real Divinity, that "He is over all, God blessed for ever." For His own assertion of His Divine character, as understood by His enemies the Jews, and interpreted by His servants the Apostles, is so clear and unmistakeable, that it leaves possible only one alternative, either that our Lord was more than man or less than holy. And this conclusion does not merely rest on isolated passages, about the meaning of which a captious criticism might dispute, but on the whole spirit and language of the New Testament. Deny our Lord's Divinity, and the grand proclamation of the Gospel becomes meaningless. For, how can we say that the giving up of His only-begotten Son was the most affecting token of our Divine Father's love, if that Son were no more than

a creature? Who would ever dream of saying, who would ever suspect the Bible of saying, that "God so loved the world that He gave His beloved son Paul, or Elijah, or Moses"? Who, on the contrary, would not feel that such an assertion was either blasphemous or meaningless? that it either brought a mere creature into a familiar nearness to God which was intolerable, or that it was a figure of speech which, under the circumstances of our sin and misery, was trifling and therefore heartless?

It is painful, and some may think not very profitable, to have thus to subject to a frigid examination the awful mysteries of our faith. This might be true if it were less generally believed that the dogmas of the Christian faith are as useless as unintelligible. It is because, on the other hand, we believe that the ethics of Christianity are unpractical apart from the spiritual facts which are described in its dogmas, that we are so earnest in the defence of these latter. For what is it to be practical? Is it to talk about what we should do, or to do it? to describe what is right, or to enable people to perform it? The law of liberty may do the former, but standing alone it is no more than a dead abstract expression indicating the form into which the soul's life ought to be fashioned. But the power, the living force which is to make each spirit of man a realised and embodied law, this is to come to us through

those supernatural facts which are described only in the dogmas of our faith. As mere forms of expression, indeed, doctrines are not less dead and powerless than the laws with which we have compared them. But still, as there must be laws to describe the form of that life which the Spirit empowers us to live, so must there be doctrines to describe the supernatural means through which we become partakers of that power. We cling to the dogma then, not as a cabballistic form of words, as a mystic incantation, but as the description of those supernatural facts of which the basis and origin is the Incarnation of the Son of God, and without which we could neither work nor live. But, my brethren, let us take care, while for this reason we prize the doctrines of our faith, that we sink not down into mere admirers of them. There is many a man who is none the better, but rather the worse, for the continual repetition of party watchwords. It may be true in a certain sense, for instance (by no means however in that which is generally intended), that "the Bible is the religion of Protestants," or that "justification by faith is the doctrine of a standing or a falling Church;" but the only value of such truths (so far as they are true) is derived not merely from seeing them, or saying them, but from using them. Study then the Bible as the means of enlightening your own natural darkness, and seek justification for the pardon and

assurance of your own guilty soul. Thank God that He has put life within your reach, but also stretch out the hand of faith to take that life; also, be not satisfied with a glow of thankfulness, or a gush of admiration, but give yourself no rest till that life is yours, yea, till you know this, till you see it proved to yourself and others in the inward renewing of your will and the transformation of your outward conduct. Look within day by day for more patience in affliction, more calmness in danger, more strength in temptation, more equanimity in bereavement, more love in provocation, more hope in the prospect of death. Look without also, for a life which represents more fully the regeneration within, which presents fewer stumbling-blocks to the weak, fewer occasions to the enemy, more numerous signs of the power of Christ's grace, more signal monuments of the triumph of God's love. Then indeed may you rest in peace and triumph in hope, yea, and say humbly, yet confidently, with the Apostle of the Gentiles, "The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, which walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

LECTURE III.

ST JOHN VIII. 46.

Which of you convinceth me of sin?

NOTHING can more conclusively prove that the objections of many modern critics of the New Testament arise rather from the exigencies of their own theories than from objective difficulties in the record, than the fact that men of the highest ability and most advanced culture discover contradictory facts in the same phenomena. Thus it has appeared to thinkers and scholars as eminent as Hase and De Wette¹ that it was the object of Jesus in His earlier life to found a political theocracy, and that only later in His career, when "the essential unworthiness" of this attempt had been revealed to Him by the opposition of the people, "did there arise in the soul of Jesus, and that too not without spiritual conflict,...the idea of a spiritual kingdom of God." Thus "it was in virtue of His inward progress that

¹ See Ullmann's *Sinlessness of Jesus*, p. 151.

Jesus was transformed from a Jewish Messiah into the Redeemer of the world." The philosophical theory of these writers required that there should be tokens of development in the life of Jesus; that as in the race, so in the individual, the idea should not too suddenly, and as it were miraculously, realize itself. And thus the more distinctly they recognized that Jesus was an historic individual, the more strenuously did they feel themselves compelled to insist that He was the subject of development.

But now again, in our time, the Gospels have been criticised from a different point of view by an author not less able and learned than those already mentioned. The author to whom I am referring, M. Renan, begins by asserting, as a necessary consequence of his materialistic philosophy, the impossibility of a miracle. This position must be maintained at all hazards; and the Gospel history must by some means be made to appear consistent with its maintenance. But, unfortunately for the critic, this result is becoming daily more difficult of attainment; for as the most modern theory of legends recognizes more of historical reality in the life of Jesus than the earlier theory of myths, it is compelled by that very admission to attack the character which it would fain exalt. Thus Strauss might consistently assume that the account of the raising

of Lazarus was but the last of a series of premonitory myths, formed out of earlier scriptural traditions and predictions, with a view of illustrating the resurrection of Jesus, and of giving an air of probability to that future magnificent exercise of His power when, according to Christian anticipations, He should raise the universal dead. And so long as it was possible to acquiesce in this assumption, while St John's account of the raising of Lazarus might perhaps indicate the vigour of the early Christian imagination, or the overpowering impression which the moral greatness of Jesus had produced upon it, it could nevertheless suggest no accusation against the character of the Master Himself. When however the abandonment in many quarters of the Hegelian philosophy had made the general theory of Strauss less acceptable, and when, moreover, men like Renan had discovered in the scenes and people of the Holy Land that "fifth Gospel" which threw back so much unexpected light on the writings of the Evangelists, it was no longer possible to accept such an explanation of the miracle at Bethany. The brother of Martha and Mary must actually have been buried and raised again, as St John relates. And in that case, from the nature of the circumstances with which the great event was surrounded, it would be necessary to admit either that a miracle was possible, and that therefore Renan's

criticism hung upon a rope of sand; or, on the other hand, that Jesus connived at an imposition. One who, like Renan, had felt such enthusiastic admiration for the mighty Prophet of Galilee, might well have shrunk back from so blighting a suggestion. And, indeed, there are evidences, from the hesitating and regretful and apologetic manner with which he endeavours to establish this fatal alternative, how unwelcome was its imagined necessity. But what escape was there? Either Jesus must have winked at deception, or the materialistic philosophy must be false. And so again, with that fanatical attachment to a theory which had driven on Strauss upon his destructive path, Renan compels himself to describe that awful scene which he imagines beside the grave of Lazarus.

But if such conclusions as this are to be rendered possible, or even tolerable, it is evident that the critic must be prepared to show in general that the Evangelists exhibit in their sketch of the character of Jesus, not gradual and laborious improvement, as De Wette imagined, but its very opposite, gradual and most painful deterioration. But surely the same account cannot depict both; surely men of so great learning and capacity cannot see in the same words at once an assertion and its denial, an affirmation and its contradiction? Or if they do, and if by a singular coincidence they find in the

Scripture the very same contradiction which had previously existed in their own philosophy, must we not suspect that, consciously or unconsciously, they are not so much seeking the natural meaning of the sacred records as that meaning which will most nearly coincide with the general direction of their private opinions. This conviction, which is forced upon the mind of a candid observer, will of course direct him, should he occupy the position of an apologist, in choosing his line of defence and attack. Since objections are found to so large an extent to have a merely subjective ground, he will of course endeavour to ascertain in what direction the general current of philosophical opinion is flowing; assured that this also will be the course of sceptical criticism. Now no one can fail to see, as indeed Mr Lecky has pointed out, that in the great struggle between idealism and materialism, the victory, for the present at least, inclines towards the latter. It is a very significant circumstance, which like a straw on the stream shows the course of its current, that in the last popular edition of his life of Jesus, Strauss has abandoned much of his former ground¹. Instead of the myth proper, which was an unconscious production of many minds, co-operating to clothe a prevailing idea in a real dress, the author now very frequently sees the conscious

¹ See *Westminster Review*, Oct. 1865.

fabrication of an individual, a fabrication which, though it could scarcely claim to be called even a legend, Strauss still dignifies with the older appellation, because it has at least been accepted, if not invented, by the popular mind. Touching these inevitable changes he remarks, "True, I have been refuted, but only as one who owes a thousand pounds is refuted, when it is shewn that he owes only a hundred." There is undoubtedly more of what is real in the character of Christ than I at first supposed, he would say, but therefore and to that degree less of what is pure. Such statements as this are not only made in our days, in unexpected quarters, but with less of apparent reluctance, with a fainter apparent consciousness that they amount to profanity. And hence too the profanity becomes more daring, so that we have heard Francis Newman declare that, of Jesus and Paul, Paul was the greater, without apparently a suspicion that he was blaspheming the Holy One of God.

In these circumstances we cannot assume, but must attempt to prove, the sinlessness of Jesus, leaving for consideration in another lecture how far and in what direction the limitation of our Lord's knowledge may be consistent therewith.

As the necessary foundation of any attempt to exhibit our Saviour's sinlessness, it will of course be necessary to explain what we mean by the word

sinslessness. At the same time it will be the less necessary to devote much attention to this point, as there is a singular coincidence of opinion upon it, both among the disciples and the critics of the Gospel. Professor Goldwin Smith remarks¹, "Whatever mystery may shroud the ultimate source of our moral being, thus much seems tolerably certain, that the seat of the moral principle in our nature is indicated and covered by the quality to which, according to the intensity of its manifestation, we give various names, ranging from benevolence to self-sacrifice. There is, I apprehend, no special virtue which is not capable of being resolved into this." In conformity with this opinion, and referring to what he very correctly calls the "passive half" of man's duty, Thomas Carlyle exclaims², "It is only with renunciation that life, properly speaking, can be said to begin,...thankfully bear then what yet remains (of afflictions), thou hadst need of them, the self in thee needed to be annihilated."

Again, it is the doctrine of Comte³ that "in every complex existence the general harmony depends on the preponderance of some chief impulse, to which all others must be subordinate. This pre-

¹ *Some supposed Consequences of the Doctrine of Historical Progress*, p. 10.

² *Sartor Resartus*, p. 117.

³ *Philosophy of Comte*, Lewis, p. 221.

ponderating influence must either be egotistic or altruistic." Now it is certain that "every individual man or animal, accustomed to live for self alone, is condemned to a miserable alternation of ignoble torpor or feverish activity;...to live for others is thus the natural conclusion of all positive morality." As thus the love of others, of God first, and of our fellow-creatures in God, is the positive ground and principle of all virtue; so Dr Julius Müller has shewn¹ that the exclusive love of self is the positive ground of all sinfulness. Pride is perhaps the most naked form in which this principle exhibits itself, for pride is nothing else than self-sufficiency, that most entire and circular contentment with self which acknowledges no obligation, and as yet seeks for no acquisition. The invasion of another's rights is a yet further development of selfishness; and in this phase it appears as ambition and covetousness, while not unfrequently, when its aggressions are opposed, it develops still further into the form of hatred—a form in which it may invade not only another's rights, but even his personality. It is in this latter form of aggression that unbridled selfishness seems to find its greatest delight; for thus it may gain not only what is material but also what is spiritual as the prey of its cruel and unhallowed desires. It is this which lends its excitement to

¹ Müller's *Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Vol. I. Chap. III. Sec. 2.

the pursuit, its horrible delight to the triumph of the seducer, that he has been able to invade the sanctuary of another's personality, to murder a soul, and for the pleasing of a momentary lust to subdue and lay in ruins the very image of God!

Falsehood again is the timidity of selfishness, as hatred is its daring; and thus one might go through the whole catalogue of iniquities, shewing still that their central principle and moving impulse is selfishness; that sin is not only *non-order*, but disorder; not merely the negative pole of good, the darker side or exaggeration of good, but positive opposition to this; the beginning life from a wrong centre; the abuse of the gift of personality by an effort like that of Satan, like that of Adam, to make it independent of God.

It may be asked here, how can this conclusion agree with the feeling that to a certain extent self-love is felt to be right? The answer to this question depends upon the distinction between what is natural and what is moral. We preserve ourselves by a natural instinct, and so long as we act solely under the impulse of this instinct we do not think of the end at all. But while the inferior animals are driven along unconsciously by the overmastering force of their natural impulses, it is the special characteristic of man that by means of his will he can hold these blind instinctive forces under restraint,

and determine their action according to the decisions of his conscience. As soon then as by means of this faculty we make self-preservation the object of moral contemplation, and begin to think "why ought I to preserve myself? what ought to be my object in exercising this care?" then the answer must be either that I may gratify myself, or give myself to God. And thus, as soon as self-preservation transcends the sphere of natural necessity and becomes an object of moral thought and action, it furnishes the occasion either for selfishness or love, and will thus exhibit to us these two divergent impulses as the fundamental principles of good and evil.

To one who has firmly and completely grasped this thought it may appear almost needless to proceed further with our investigation. For the character of Christ exhibits so complete a picture of self-renunciation in obedience to the call of love, that as we trace it through all its stages, from that first *κένωσις* through which He took upon Him the form of a servant, along the way of perfect obedience in which it was His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him, even to the end of unparalleled self-sacrificing love, we are alike unable to detect anything selfish in what was done, and to conceive anything wanting which was left undone. It was the perfect realization of the highest conceivable ideal of self-sacrificing love, of that which we

have found to be the essential principle of goodness, the absolute negation of evil.

Now, if our general acquaintance with the picture of Christ's character produces in us irresistibly the conviction that it is the perfect, and therefore the final type of goodness, we may be sure that the affirmation of faults in detail, (such as those imagined by Francis Newman,) arises, as Professor Smith has conclusively shewn, from a superficial consideration of the subject. Nevertheless, as objections of this kind are still alleged, it may be well to sketch for you some of the positive aspects of this perfect character, in order to make our general conception of it at once firmer in its outlines and fuller in its contents.

Our attention is first claimed by the testimony of Jesus to Himself, which is specially important, not only as expressing the fullest knowledge of His inner life, but also as having a special bearing upon His claims to be sinless. The words of our text (which must be considered more particularly hereafter in another connexion) are yet entitled to a foremost place among those in which our Saviour asserts generally His own moral perfection. In the context He accuses the Pharisees of rejecting His word because of their guilty aversion to the truth; because they are "of their father the devil," and, like him, love falsehood and evil. At once to prove

and illustrate this statement, the Lord continues, "which of you convinceth me of sin?" I walk in the mid-day glare of public criticism; I pour out the very secrets of my soul before you on the deepest and most sacred subjects; you not only see what I do, but even know what I think; and now, out of the fulness of your knowledge of me, "which of you convinceth me of sin?" If no one, if my life must be admitted to be stainless, my words to be irreproachable, then from the organic connexion between the right and the true, from the perfect affinity of the pure soul for what is morally authentic, I must not less certainly say what is true, than do what is right. And, "if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?" Because you have no affinity for the truth, because your souls are impure, and love that which is like themselves.

Now, whatever we may think of the assumption upon which this argument is built, viz. that perfect holiness implies perfect intuition of the morally true, there can be no doubt at least that Jesus made it, and as little that He offered His own life as its illustration, thereby affirming that He was so stainlessly holy that He had a perfect and unfailing affinity for truth, a perfect and unfailing aversion to error. This belief of Jesus concerning His own character is set forth continually, and in the plainest terms, in those of His words which are reported

in the New Testament. But such arguments as that in the text are much more explicit than any merely general assertion, for they not only make a statement, but fix also the limits of its meaning, thereby assuring us that we have not mistaken it. Jesus then most assuredly testified concerning Himself that He was sinlessly perfect; that He exhibited as complete a reflection as a stainless humanity could display of the glory of the Divine Majesty.

And now what weight shall we allow to this testimony?

First of all, we cannot resist the conviction that, at least with reference to His own purity or sinfulness, the Lord must have known Himself; for this is a matter on which not only ordinary, but even evil men are judges. But it may be seen by the merest glance at the Gospels that the moral discrimination and advancement of Jesus were at least far above the ordinary standard of human attainment. His wonderful analysis of character in the parables, or in the Sermon on the Mount, and not less the keenness and precision of His discrimination between the good and evil in the hearts and lives of those who addressed Him, must convince us at once that He whose vision was so keen, whose thoughts about God and man were so noble and clear, could not have failed to discern that in Himself which even evil men are able to discover. But

if indeed there had been undiscovered and unacknowledged evil in the heart of Jesus, this would argue in Him a moral nature exceptionally inert and unsensitive. For in those who are sinful nothing more surely betokens great purity and saintliness of character than the humble confession of sin and demerit in the sight of God. But in the whole course of His history Jesus never once exhibits this consciousness, never once makes the remotest allusion to it, not even in prayer, not even at the most solemn moments of His life, when bending in agony or hanging in torture in the presence of the Infinite Holiness. Yea, so far is He, even before God, from humbling Himself on account of sin, that in the darkest hour of His sorrowful life, in that hour when the world's sin seemed nearest to His Spirit, and the love and comfort of His Father seemed farthest away, the cry that arises from the Cross, as it would cleave its way through the earthly gloom to the lost brightness of heaven, is a last, and perhaps the very strongest, protest of His innocence; "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Why is it that I have the sense of separation without the consciousness of sin?

In the view of such expressions as these we shall be obliged to conclude either that our Lord was sinless, or that He was worse and more defective

than those of His sinful people to whom the Holy Spirit has shewn the necessity for confession and humility. And between these alternatives we surely cannot hesitate for a moment. For it is Christ's life which empowers the saints, which stimulates them, which rebukes and humbles them. If then He who was not only better than all men, but the source of life to all, if He felt no consciousness of sin even when bending in prayer where the full white light of the Divine Holiness beat down upon His Spirit without intercession or diminution, then assuredly He was what He felt Himself to be, "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." And thus it is already made evident from our Saviour's own testimony, and without the complete vindication which that testimony receives from His blameless life, that alone among the sons of Adam He was without sin. But this testimony does not stand alone. It is sustained and supplemented by that of the Apostles.

Let us now then shortly enquire, what is the character of that testimony? what do the Apostles say about their Master? what is the general aspect of the picture which they have drawn for us of His Person, character, and life?

First, and most generally, it leaves upon us the impression of transcendent greatness. This is allowed on every hand, by enemies and friends, by doubters

and believers alike. Whatever opinions may be held in general about our Lord's origin and absolute sinlessness, it is admitted with but few and obscure exceptions that in the sphere of morality and religion He was unapproachably great.

And this His greatness is of a very peculiar character. For we could not say of our Lord that He was great in any special department of human thought and activity—as a warrior, a statesman, a poet, an artist, or even as a priest or teacher. He was greater than a worker, or prophet, or priest. He was great as a Man; as a Being to whom all these functions and offices are possible; and His greatness has this aspect of universality, just because it was achieved in the highest sphere of our being, in connexion with those moral and spiritual faculties which give their character and direction to all others. Thus He was not a moral and religious man among other things. No; but so pre-eminently holy and spiritual in every movement of His nature that His moral greatness subordinated everything to itself; never permitting any of those accidents of life which separate man from man to mark His Spirit with their peculiarity. He was born, He grew and was developed “at the confluence of three races¹, the Jewish, the Greek, and the Roman, each of which had strong national peculiarities of its

¹ Goldwin Smith, p. 17.

own; and yet (surely by the greatest miracle that was ever imagined, unless His nature be unique) He has escaped the least tinge of nationality." And not only did the good, or at least the harmless, influences of His own age fail to affect His character or colour His life,—even its vices and exaggerations provoked in Him no undue reaction. There is no trace of Antinomian laxity in His rebuke of the formal and bigoted Pharisees; no unpatriotic coldness in His condemnation of the worldly fanaticism of Jewish nationality. He is neither borne away on the current of popular feeling, nor stirred by opposition to resist its legitimate flow; while firmly repressing the political ambition even of His disciples, He preaches the Gospel first to the Jews, and weeps over the approaching desolation of Jerusalem.

Again, it is owing to the extent of its sphere of operation that the Lord's piety never appears obtrusive. No one would have said of Him that He was superhumanly pious. Much more probably would this have been said or felt of the formal and ascetic Pharisees, who just because the Divine life in them was not abundant and deep-seated, were obliged to be continually seeking it as a something without them, and putting what they possessed of it forward that it might be seen. Now in the life of our blessed Lord we never see His piety separated

in this manner from His activity, or connected with that ostentatious mortification, and those frequent and painful wrestlings in prayer which, in point of fact, reveal quite as much a man's spiritual poverty as his spiritual earnestness. On the contrary, the Divine Life in Him is the fire which burns ever with bright and continuous flame on the consecrated altar of His heart, glowing in every emotion, shining through every word and deed; and, in short, pervading and illuminating His whole Being and activity. We feel sure that the Lord Jesus could never have had to change His face or His tone when He began to talk of eternal things; that whether He were in a fishing-boat or a feasting-chamber, in the house or by the way, resting wearily by the well of Sychar or teaching the multitudes from the mountain-pulpit of Gennesaret, He would always find it easy, nay, inevitable, to speak at once of the things of His Father. And there could be no plainer proof than this of the fulness of His Divine Life. It was never to seek, because it knew no lack; it was never inactive, because there was no moment when its flame burnt low; it left no part of life uninfluenced, because the great throb of its intensive energy distributed the life-giving stream to the utmost extremities of its extensive development.

And thus the Lord Jesus is great, not so much

like the great heroes of secular history, on account of the splendour of His deeds, as because of the grandeur of His character—a grandeur and a glory which needed no aurora of brilliant achievements to make them visible to men's eyes, but which out of their own luminous depths shone without effort through the darkness of the world's common-place; not like the brilliance of the electric star which dazzles a narrow circle of beholders for a little space, but like the genial brightness of the imperial sun which shines without pause or effort and pours its glory over every land!

This intrinsic spiritual greatness, which needed no mighty works for its external display, is evidenced by nothing more strikingly than by the Redeemer's unvarying serenity and repose. His public life was one which made continual and severe demands both on His intellectual and emotional nature; and yet, in all the most trying crises of temptation and suffering, He maintains this wonderful self-possession and tranquillity undisturbed. There are indeed variations of feeling, alternations of joy and sorrow, flitting across His Spirit, like the shadows of clouds across a sunny landscape; but still these are no more than natural variations, the ordinary response of a strong and equal mind to the stimulus of sympathy or suffering, of success or adversity. But we never feel that even in its

most excited moments the Spirit of Jesus is thrown off the balance; that it wastes its energy in unmeaning vehemence or unworthy complaint; that it forgets, even for an instant, its Divine purpose and Divine dignity in passionate exclamations or enraptured self-forgetfulness. He was without those sudden and ecstatic disturbances which mark the access of spiritual influence in the earlier prophets, because there was none of the earthliness in His nature which makes such contrasts possible. He had never been so far immersed in natural darkness as to be dazzled by celestial light; but while moving in a world of sense and sin, among those who felt like outcasts from the celestial city, He breathed the spiritual air as His natural element, and lived in the presence of God as His recognized home, unconquerably mighty in His spiritual energy, immovably stedfast in His unassailable holiness.

— And yet, while the Lord is seen to be thus calm and immovable in His conscious power and impeccability, on the other hand His calmness has none of the stillness of torpidity, of the repose of stony indifference. He was as tender as strong, as humble as majestic. He cared for the meanest and guiltiest; He called to Him the weary and heavy-laden, the sinner and the publican; His whole life was one great act of pitying self-sacrifice; the complete and harmonious development of an utterly

unselfish nature, unapproachably lofty when circumstances demand it, and as unapproachably tender when these are changed; courageous in danger "with that courage which is most clear of animal impetuosity," and tender in distress with that tenderness which is freest from hysterical self-indulgence; so perfect a type and realization of Divine love that "the mental eye, though strained to aching, cannot discern whether that on which it gazes be most the object of reverence or affection;" the richest union of all various greatness, the deepest harmony of all possible good, the perfect co-ordination of majesty and lowness, the summit of human greatness bowed ever in deepest humility before God, the absolute negation of selfishness, the perfect realization of love!

It would seem thus, that, apart from the Lord's own testimony, we have sufficient evidence of His sinlessness in the witness of His Apostles, unless indeed we can suppose that a number of poor and simple men, if earnest and veracious, still ordinary and unimaginative, were able, by putting together their confused perceptions of the ideal, to produce a character of higher unity, harmony, and nobility, than had been conceived by all the great masters of thought and discourse; or unless in fine we make the more monstrous supposition of Strauss, that the unity of Christ's character has been derived (to use

the words of Quinet) “from the most confused mixture that history has ever allowed to appear; a chaos of Hebrews, Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Romans; of the grammarians of Alexandria, scribes of Jerusalem, Essenes, Sadducees, and Jewish monks. Shall we assert that this vague multitude, forgetting the differences of origin, of creeds and institutions, is suddenly blended into one spirit to invent the same ideal, to create from nothing, and render palpable to all the human race the character which best contrasts with all the past (which alone furnishes its type and standard to all the future)? At least it will be confessed that this is the strangest miracle that has ever been heard of, and that the water changed into wine was as nothing in comparison!”

It has been thought however by Renan that it may be possible to take a middle course, and, without either admitting the possibility just stated, or what seems at first sight its only alternative, that Jesus was actually sinless, to maintain that an independent student of the Gospels can readily detect in the character of our Saviour signs of deterioration in the course of its development.

It is asserted that the best days of our Lord’s life were manifestly His early days, that then, availing Himself of the intense Messianic excitement in Galilee, and addressing a specially susceptible popu-

lation, His exquisite natural sweetness, lowness, and spirituality exerted an irresistible influence on all around Him. But much depended even then on what He had learnt from the past and what He found in the present. From the past He had appropriated all which was excellent in the teaching of the Rabbis; in the present He found in Galilee a population simple, good and happy, free at once from the severe and gloomy bigotry of Jerusalem, and prepared by a life of simple out-door labour, and by contact with a nature rich, sweet and beautiful, to drink in with avidity and delight the pure and tender inspirations of the Master in their earliest bloom. Docile as children, these simple people lived already in the kingdom of God, and "an old word, Paradise, summed up the general dream,"—that of a delightful garden, where the charming life which was led here below would be continued for ever.

This was the earlier life; but M. Renan imagines that as the days went by and the Master was withdrawn from these enthusiastic disciples, when He came into collision with a hard dogmatic ritualism in Jerusalem, and felt for the first time the full difficulty of establishing His ideal kingdom among the rulers of the people, then it is conceived that His character deteriorated;—the gentleness, simplicity, gaiety and truthfulness of His earlier days deepening into the gloom and fierceness and compromise of

unforeseen disappointment. We are plainly told that then “He was no longer free,” but “carried away by the fearful progress of enthusiasm;” that “His natural gentleness seemed to have abandoned Him;” that “He was sometimes harsh and capricious;” that “His idea of the kingdom of God became disturbed and exaggerated;” that, in short, “contact with men degraded Him to their level”—He could even connive at length at such an imposition as the imaginary resurrection of Lazarus.

Now the *prima facie* answer to this charge is furnished, not by the sentimental caricature of M. Renan, but by the truer picture of Christ’s life and character which I have endeavoured to present to you. Would not such an act, for instance, as that last mentioned be in such a character a more tremendous moral miracle than the imagination ever conceived? Here is a character which we have found to be a perfect development of the absolute principle of goodness, and yet it can be so meanly selfish as to seek its own glory by abetting a known falsehood; so impious as to seek a momentary applause through conscious blasphemy against God. Jesus, it is said, knows that the scene at Bethany is got up for effect, and yet He can cry by the grave, in the hearing of the people, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me; and I knew that Thou hearest me always.” My brethren, there is not an

honest man amongst us that would not shrink back with horror from such blasphemy, and yet it has seemed possible to M. Renan that the Truth Himself should be guilty of it! Such a supposition could only have appeared tolerable for a moment by the side of that essentially weak, false, and non-moral, if not immoral, representation of Christ's early days which I have just reproduced, and which I do not hesitate to say has neither foundation nor even excuse in the New Testament.

There was no such Galilee as is represented, no such reflex of the beautiful nature in beautiful souls, no such general docility and enthusiasm. There might, it is true, be less spiritual hardness than at Jerusalem, but on the other hand there was abundance of sordid materialism and fierce fanaticism. Jesus had to tell the multitudes plainly that they sought Him, "not because they saw the miracles, but only because they did eat of the loaves and were filled." When He insisted upon a more spiritual communion, not only the multitudes, but also "many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him," so that He even found it necessary to ask the Twelve themselves, "Will ye also go away?" It was at Nazareth, where our Lord was brought up, that "they rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill wheron their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong."

It was of His native district that He said, “A prophet is not without honour save in his own country, and in his own house.” It was of Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, towns of Galilee, that He made the mournful declaration that Tyre and Sidon would have repented at preaching which they had disregarded. In short, it is apparent on every page of the Evangelical history, that the picture of M. Renan is simply a creation of his own fancy—a weak, sentimental, romantic dream, which, though not without occasional beauty, both of form and substance, corresponds to nothing but the French materialism of the 19th century.

M. Renan’s account of our Lord’s earlier teaching will be found not less fanciful and baseless than that of His Divine character. This author conceives that it was mainly derived from those beautiful moral sayings, then current, which were afterwards enshrined in the pages of the Talmud. Now no one would wish to assert that everything which our Saviour said was original. On the contrary, if He were indeed the Light of men, then our little systems are no better than broken lights of His transcendent glory, each reflecting something of its brightness, but each concealing more than it reflects beneath the veil of mere human representation. The law of Moses was such a light, and not less the mighty proclamations of the Prophets. The sayings of Rabbis

were yet dimmer reflections, exhibiting only here and there a gleam of spiritual light, struggling painfully through encompassing mists and darkness. As well say that the sun borrowed his rays from the reflection in lake or river, as that the Lord Jesus was formed by the Rabbis. For as it has been finely remarked, the characteristic of His teaching is that "there is no shadow in it." His soul was so pure, His spiritual intuition so direct, that He appropriated naturally all which was pure and true wherever He found it, rejecting as naturally all which was evil and false. This is the great wonder—not merely that He said beautiful and true things, but that all He said was beautiful and true, that nothing which He said was false or evil; that His perfect nature gathered up all spiritual truths from every quarter, and reducing them into an organic unity, binding them together by a single rational bond, so lent them creative force and impetus, power of conviction, energy of life! It is mere trifling to compare the single utterances of such a Teacher with the gleams in darkness of Rabbis and philosophers; the things are different in kind; as different as the direct illumination of the sun from its scattered earthly reflections.

Nor is M. Renan's account of the latter part of our Lord's life and teaching more successful than that of the former.

We find no authority in the Gospels for the confident and injurious assertion that there was a deterioration or even a change in the later character of our adorable Redeemer. Where in the Gospels do we find the picture of that enthusiastic and unforeboding dreamer? the reality of that earthly and sentimental image of superficial and almost selfish gaiety? We are referred to the Sermon on the Mount. Examine then the most exultant portion of that teaching, the first gracious words of blessing which strike the key-note of the whole! And what is their character? Have they the tone of thoughtless gaiety, of unconscious rapture, of light and unforeboding satisfaction with the present? On the other hand, we can only understand them at all by assuming that they were uttered in the full view of the mournful future; for they speak of the want and the hunger and the mourning which must arise in each man when he first struggles upward from sin towards God; yea, of the suffering and danger and death which must be the lot of all the faithful, when once the struggle is fairly commenced with the godless opposition of the world.

And if thus we discern in our Lord's earlier life, not in faint and uncertain traces, but in firm distinct outline, the pensiveness of "the Man of sorrows," we fail not to trace as clearly the joy and confidence of the triumphant King in His later days of trial and suffering.

No doubt it is true, in general, that the expression of our Lord's feelings rises into a higher key in proportion to the increasing energy of the stimulus which they received from outward circumstances. We should thus expect the tone of His denunciation to deepen in severity with the growing malice and obstinacy of Pharisaic resistance; and as the terrible burden of the world's sin fell upon Him more heavily, we should not the less expect Him to meet it with a deeper intensity of answering anguish. In these latter days of the great conflict with evil, our Lord's whole nature was plainly stimulated to its utmost activity; the hand of worldly resistance smote upon the harp of His holy emotions with its utmost force, and these vibrated to the stroke in their sweetest and loudest tones. It had been in no wise wonderful if, in such a storm of persecution, we had heard but little else from Him except sorrow and denunciation. But it was no ordinary soul which gave itself to be smitten, and thus we detect the sweet answer of joy and love in tones as loud and resonant as those of the deeper response of indignation and sorrow. There were joy and love doubtless in those days by the lake and the mountain, but no joy so triumphant as that with which He welcomed the firstfruits of the Gentiles to His Church, crying in the very shadow of the Cross, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men."

unto me." Yea, there was no love so tender as that with which He wept over the doom of impenitent Jerusalem, and prayed for His murderers, even in the agony of death—"Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

In the feast of Palms we see the perfect equilibrium of these conflicting feelings;—here the triumph of Easter and the sorrow of Calvary blend into one;—the triumph of approaching victory glorifying the sorrow, the foretaste of coming agony chastening the triumph. The Lord was ever indeed triumphant, as knowing Himself the predestined King of the better age, at the same time He was always sorrowful, as perceiving the means through which alone for Him and His people sin made the victory possible. But now, when His suffering and His triumph were so near—when already He was entering the darkness of Calvary, and felt in anticipation the rapture of that victory which He should gain beneath its shroud—that victory which should turn all earthly darkness into day,—what wonder that the commingling streams of these feelings were excited to a fuller flow, that they should become greater in amount as we see them, even though unchanged in proportion. But the miracle is, that through all they were unchanged in proportion, that through such a fearful storm of emotions the Lord's character kept its perfect equipoise, showing one or other of

its phases, and a greater or less degree of its intensity, according to the precise character of the stimulus applied ;—as ready to rejoice as to sorrow beneath the thunder-clouds of gathering wrath, and to reply with love as with anger to the bitterness of adversaries. And thus, through all His chequered history, we meet only with one perfect Lord and God, our soul's Lord, Redeemer, King, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day, and for ever;” the perfect mirror of the Divine love, the absolute standard of human perfection !

We believe this, when our eyes are rightly directed ; but still, at best, the evidence of sight is fleeting and ineffectual. We need also an inward and an abiding witness. And such a witness may be had. For the holy Apostles tell us that the Lord Jesus still lives, and imparts to those who believe in Him the power of that very life whose form and nature they have described to us. They distinctly affirm that the union between Christians and their ascended Redeemer is real and even organic, like that between the head and the several members of our body, or that between the vine and its branches. And if thus the life of faith that is in Christians, in consequence of their new birth, be in very deed the life of Christ, so that they can say, in a real sense, “I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,” then it is apparent that, as Schleiermacher urged, a true

Christian can judge from his own experience of the nature of his Master's life ; if that life be really communicated to him, then it must be, as to its nature, like that of it which he experiences.

But what a daring thing to say; what a position to be committed to; for thus we cannot rest the claims of Christ on external testimony alone, but constitute each Christian man himself in some sort a judge of the truth of the Scriptures. Nay, surely such an admission is even fatal to the cause which we advocate, for if indeed the life of Christ were essentially sinless it must have produced a stainless purity in those to whom it has been communicated. And so indeed it has done ; so far forth as the life of Christ prevails in us we are sinless, so far forth as the new life in Christ has displaced and driven out the old life of our sinful flesh we are that which Christ was. Yea, and in greater or less measure we are assured of this. Every true Christian knows that if the Spirit of Christ which he feels to be within him, should ever completely put down the flesh (the corrupt nature which he has inherited), he would be wholly separated from sin—for he feels and knows that every impulse of the life of Christ within him is pure and holy, towards God, and away from evil. Yea, there are seasons in the regenerate life of some Christians when this possibility has for a short time appeared to become a reality, when the

life of Christ has seemed to possess them wholly, when, for a few blessed days or weeks, they have never been conscious of a single movement of that rebellious nature, which nevertheless, as subsequent unhappy experience has too clearly proved, all the while slumbered within. I must speak cautiously on such a subject, but I could not love Christ if I said less—if I did not avow my belief, yea my experience, that there is possible to those whose weakness may require it, and when our Father in heaven wills it so, an internal evidence of the sinlessness of Christ, so overwhelmingly convincing, that you might as well tell the man who has known it that there is no sun in the heavens, as that there is no living Christ, at the right hand of GOD pouring forth upon His people the spirit of holiness and love! And though no one may prescribe to GOD the mode or measure in which such grace shall be given, though it be acknowledged with respect to extraordinary evidence, that the most spotless saints, as needing it less, may have least of it below, not demanding an open vision like impatient Thomas, but waiting meekly till GOD shall vouchsafe it in its fulness beyond the veil; yet with respect to that more ordinary and more abiding witness of which I spoke at first, it is not only necessary, in these days of doubt and conflict, but will most assuredly be given, to every man who seeks it faithfully in Christ. You

may not perhaps feel the necessity for this inward testimony while you are encompassed and pre-occupied by the noisy trivialities of time, while as a young man it seems enough if you be a student or an athlete, while in middle life it suffices you to be a merchant, or a physician, or an artist, or a statesman. But when a man comes to life's retirement and solitude, when he has left the trivial interests and the clamorous voices far behind, and catches already the solemn whisper, which he heard in life's morning—heard and so soon forgot—then he feels, with a Lyndhurst or a Wellington, that it is not enough to be successful and celebrated in this world. He feels then that he is more than a healer of bodily hurts, or than an interpreter of petty agreements—that he is a man with an immortal soul, answerable to GOD; that he is going, even as the hour runs by, into that eternal Presence, to be dealt with there, not merely as a diligent exchanger of commodities, or as a cunning interpreter of contracts, or as a successful commander of armies, but as a man whose duty it was above all things and in all things to love GOD, yea, and to reflect the holy love of his Eternal Father on all the ways of his earthly pilgrimage. And at such a time as that nothing will do for us but Christ, nothing less than His sufficient Atonement will still the accusing voice of conscience, nothing less than the possession of His Perfect Life

can enable us to look forward with joy to the company of the Blessed. Seek then, my brethren, to gain that now, which can alone give happiness to the present, and hope to the future; so shall your faith rest no longer on the shifting ground of reports and opinions, but on the firm rock of personal and spiritual experience; so shall you in turn be honoured to be a witness for your Master's sinless purity, and to be an instrument of your Master's Almighty grace.

LECTURE IV.

ST JOHN VIII. 46.

Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?

I ENDEAVOURED to indicate last Sunday that our Lord's human greatness consisted pre-eminently in His perfect moral purity, His infallible spiritual intuition, and His entire and unreserved devotion, in the communion of love, to the will of His heavenly Father. He possessed in perfection those moral and spiritual faculties which belong to the highest province of our being, which through their healthy regulative operation give its true worth and distinctive character to every one of our words and actions, and which in fine are the property not of any particular age, nation, or profession, but of universal humanity. Hence we found that none of those temporal accidents which separate man from man were able to mark His spirit with their peculi-

arity; that His character exhibited no tinge of nationality, no idiosyncrasy of nature, no prejudice of creed, no scar of conflict, no one-sidedness of asceticism, no obtrusiveness of sanctity; but a rich, harmonious development of all various greatness,—wonderful, not so much for its brilliant outward form, as for its full and even, circular, intrinsic loveliness; a development proceeding without pause or retrogression, untroubled either by sorrow or enthusiasm, suffering neither arrest nor deviation under the stress of temptation and resistance, but advancing equably in its whole breadth of thought and feeling, intuition, and sympathy, until at length it presented a revelation of the grace and glory of GOD as complete as the nature of man could disclose.

If then there be limitation in the human knowledge of our Redeemer, we should be prepared to assert at once that this is not at least to be looked for in a moral or spiritual direction. For morally and spiritually we see the Lord filled with the measureless gift of the Holy Ghost; we see Him revealing ever more brightly the inherent glory of the Godhead, from the time when His soul-piercing questions disclosed first to the doctors in the Temple the might of that soul which should one day move like a creative breath upon the sensitive, spiritual waters of Israel, onward to that last glorious farewell of earth, when He ascended from the wooded

slopes of Olivet, and vanished from the wistful gaze of His Apostles, waving back blessings to the last, while the glorious veil of the innermost eternal sanctuary closed more completely around Him. Here, at least, is no hint, no possibility of limitation ; for to a soul of such perfect moral purity imperfect moral knowledge (as our text implies) is utterly impossible. The text, as we saw last week, is the minor premiss of a syllogism which requires as its major, the affirmation, that there is an essential affinity between the right and the true, or more concretely, that one who is sinless can neither receive nor teach what is false. If the Lord's enemies admitted this assertion, then the fact, which they could not deny, that His life was perfectly blameless, would compel them to acquiesce in the conclusion that what he said was true. "If, then," He urges, in application, "I say the truth, why do ye not believe me ?"

At present we are concerned not with the answer to this interrogation, but rather with the exact meaning of that primary assumption which justified it ; we have to ask, does that assumption justify the statement in its utmost generality of meaning, that it is impossible for one who is perfect in morality to be imperfect in knowledge? or does the context impose certain limits within which alone this statement is true ?

We shall have to adopt, I think, the latter alternative. For our Saviour tells His adversaries that they "cannot hear His words," because they are of the father of lies ; and again, "ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God." We thus see that the truth of which our Saviour's sinlessness is the sufficient condition and guarantee, is such that a morally good and truth-loving man, who gave himself to be led and taught by the Holy Spirit, would be sure to recognize and receive it. In speaking speculatively about the mysterious personality of the Lord Jesus we can never be quite sure that we may not be saying something erroneous and unworthy, but about the powers and capacities of ordinary men we can at least argue safely. Now, is any one prepared to affirm that the truth-loving observation of an ordinary man, even when aided and guided by the ordinary grace of God, will enable him to recognize intuitively the author of a disputed passage in an ancient work, or to perceive without previous study the truth of a long and complicated chain of mathematical reasoning ? If not, then it is not such truth which is spoken of here ; for to the perception of this truth our Saviour declares that moral qualifications in his hearers would be sufficient. So far then as the solution of our difficulty depends upon the text, we are authorized to assert no more than this, that sinless perfection implies

infallible intuition not of all truth, but only of moral and religious truth.

But it is objected that though this or that passage of Scripture may affirm no more than this, our own mind does; we cannot avoid the conviction that ignorance of any kind must have been impossible to the God-man ; or at least that if ignorance did exist, it must have drawn after it in some form or measure the dark shadow of sin.

But such a conviction as this may arise from early prejudice or untrue assumptions, and thus it becomes necessary to ask what is the ground of it ? Does it arise from the not unnatural conception that the divinity of Christ must be to Him what our rational spirit is to us ? If so, we have already seen that this is the Apollinarian heresy ; it mutilates the Lord's humanity, it gives us a High-priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and it directly contradicts that creed which it is the just pride of these objectors to profess, that as well as being "perfect God" Christ is "perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting."

It may still be urged, however, that in consequence of the union of the Divine nature with the human in the personality of our adorable Redeemer, His human spirit must have had a far deeper insight into universal truth than can be possessed by that of

any other member of the human race. This suggestion brings us to the threshold of a subject which should never be approached without the deepest and most awful reverence. I have already pointed out that its mysteries are beyond our comprehension. But perhaps the nearest approach to a formal explication of what the Scriptures suggest about the "unio personalis" is furnished by the devout and reverent mind of Dorner, who, reminding us that the Church of the 3rd century found the most adequate representation of the eternal Sonship in the conception of an eternal generation, suggests himself, with profound insight into the difficulties of the problem, that in like manner it will be necessary to explain dynamically the personal union of the two natures in Christ. In the Divine nature there could not be growth or development, but in the human nature we know that there was, for St Luke tells us that the Lord grew in wisdom; while the Saviour Himself declares, even after the commencement of His public ministry, that He is ignorant of the time of His second coming. But if the humanity of our Redeemer grew in capacity, developing as time went on, if not new faculties, yet at least an increasing power of perception and keenness of susceptibility in those which already existed, it must have made room within the limits of its expanding consciousness for a greater fulness of the Deity. So that although

the union was never more real than at first, though the whole nature of the eternal Son was as truly united to the child Jesus as to the perfect Man, yet did it, in the process of time, become, so to speak, more extensively articulated in the humanity; causing through the process of such articulation a movement in the constitution of the Divine-human personality.

Now while this theory leaves room for a human development, yea, while it requires such a development for its justification, it yet calls upon us to take into account, while endeavouring to understand the intuitional power of the man Christ Jesus, the ever-brightening illumination of the holy sanctuary of His humanity by the essential glory of the immanent Godhead.

Thus, while the divinity of Christ continually elevated His humanity, this in turn became an ever more perfect organ for His Divinity. We must not therefore consider any of the acts or words in the life of the Lord Jesus as either purely human or purely Divine. There was a human, and there was also a Divine element in each of them; and we may perhaps venture to think a larger measure of one of these elements in some aspects of the Lord's life than in others, according as circumstances called out the one or the other side of His personality into greater activity. Thus by the grave-side of Lazarus

we may trace more especially the affectionate man, mingling his tears with those of His sorrowing friends, while in the storm-tost fishing boat we see more clearly the mighty God, at whose dread bidding the roaring wind and raging waters sink into obedient rest. And yet plainly the Deity is present at the grave of Bethany, and not less plainly the man on the storm-vext lake. It may perhaps help us to conceive this, if we remember that in a certain sense our nature also is twofold, that we too consist of body and spirit, of thoughts and appetites, and yet that though sometimes the instinctive and sometimes the spiritual feelings preponderate, it would be difficult to point out a single act or word in which both did not co-exist and co-operate. And even thus is it, though of course in a yet more mysterious sense, in the unique personality of our Redeemer. And therefore may we never presume to determine the extent of his human knowledge; therefore must we ever, when entering in thought that holy temple of His mysterious personality, take off our shoes, and cover our faces; for this is no less than the tabernacle of the Lord God Himself, with the Shekinah dwelling ever in its holiest place.

Far be from us then the presumptuous thought of measuring by the line of our shallow understanding the knowledge and faculty of the Lord Jesus Christ. But still, however deep or wide that know-

ledge may be, we are bidden by Scripture to look for a growth in it, to put far from us all those Docetic thoughts, which however reverent in their origin, are in their inevitable result destructive not less of the objective integrity of revealed truth, than of that life-giving power of spiritual appeal, which has made it to the Christian the source of comfort and salvation. Since the imperfection in our Lord's knowledge is necessarily implied by the very fact of development; since that which increases must necessarily have advanced towards the greater from that which was less, our aim must be, not to measure the extent of that imperfection (the thought of that be far from us), but to indicate the direction in which it might sinlessly exist. Yea, in order to be sure that I am not speaking vain words, I would desire to circumscribe within yet narrower limits the area of our speculations, and to consider not so much the question what kind of ignorance was possible to the God-man, but (while not indeed altogether losing sight of the former subject) rather this—what kind and degree of ignorance were left possible to Jesus Christ by the fact of His human sinlessness. If we can only arrive at a satisfactory determination of this latter question, we shall be in a far better position for putting the former with precision. For of that kind of ignorance which is excluded by the consideration of sinlessness there can be no further

question, while on the other hand difficulties can no longer be raised on the ground of the Lord's sinlessness, which are really only connected with the fact of the Incarnation. And this latter especially will be a very great gain ; for if it can be shewn to a reasonable man that difficulties only arise, where from the nature of the subject they must be expected, he will no longer suffer them to perplex his intellect, or disturb his faith.

Let us begin then by enquiring in general what kind of ignorance may be compatible with the existence in a finite creature of perfect sinlessness. Such a condition of nature must secure in the first place perfect freedom from prejudice and partiality, from that obliquity of vision which is caused, on the one hand, by the presence in the mind of false conclusions once heedlessly or sinfully received, and on the other, by the violent and clamorous interference of sinful or ill-regulated desires. And, again, the effect of this ethical perfection will be more than a merely negative one ; it will not only exhibit itself in the entire absence of all hindrances to the formation of a sound judgment, or the exertion of a correct intuition, but further, in the presence of that natural affinity for truth, of which we still see something in the simplest and purest even among sinful men ; and the possession of which by our Redeemer, in the very highest degree, is assumed, as we saw in the text.

There, however, we found that the truth of which the Lord's sinlessness secured to Him the infallible intuition, was truth of a particular species, viz. moral and religious truth ; and a very little consideration will suffice to convince us that no act of cognition can be affected by the existence of sinlessness, unless the object, which it is exerted to cognize, be adapted to call the moral faculties into play.

But are there any objects of knowledge which if our moral nature were perfectly sensitive would fail to stimulate us to moral activity when they offered themselves for perception ? I think that a moment's consideration will convince us that there are objects of knowledge, of which the reception by a finite being of a correct or incorrect statement, would involve neither praise nor blame. I say "the reception by a finite being"—for no doubt there are profound reasons, known to the Maker and Preserver of all, why plants for instance should follow one manner of growth rather than another, or why at a particular conjuncture of human history a certain event should have been accompanied by special circumstances, and witnessed by a definite number of individuals; and doubtless to a mind sensitive to the most delicate fitnesses, the inaccurate statement of the most minute detail in connection with such facts would impart a sense of untruthfulness and incongruity. But our question is not, would such an

impression be produced on Omniscience? but definitely this, Can the nature of a finite being be perfectly sinless, if, in the minutest particular, it fails to detect even the slightest divergence from the natural order of GOD? If it can, then the ignorance of some things—yea, the reception of an inaccurate statement of some things—is consistent with perfect creaturely sinlessness; but if it cannot, then we must either assert directly that perfect finite morality is impossible, or make the same assertion indirectly, by declaring that of perfect finite morality one of the essential conditions is Omniscience; that thus to be finite is to be guilty, to be human is to be sinful. It is really to maintain this barren conclusion that those commit themselves, who venture, with an eminent living divine, to assert of our Lord's ignorance of the day of His second coming, that it is yet “a question to be decided, whether our Lord spoke of a real ignorance, or of an economical or professed ignorance.” Doubtless the temptation to hazard so unworthy an assumption is great; for the matter on which ignorance is here confessed is one essentially connected with the development of Christ's kingdom, and it might be suggested at first sight, that ignorance on such a point implied in the Redeemer an imperfection even of moral and spiritual intuition. And yet, when we think again, how completely is such a suspicion dissipated. It was no

doubt a thing of the last importance—a thing even implied in the assertion of perfect spiritual knowledge—that our Saviour should know the inevitable nature of that result in which the conflict between good and evil must issue; but when that result should be accomplished, at what point of time all rebel wills should have had a fitting trial, this is not essentially a spiritual thing, yea, it is so distinctly seen to be a matter merely formal and adventitious in our own days, that nearly all competent and sober expositors of the prophecies have ceased to regard apparent notes of time therein as anything more than numerical symbols. Ignorance on such a point can lead therefore to no suspicion of the imperfection of our Lord's spiritual intuition. But let me remark that we have here the most striking evidence that amongst those things which are without the spiritual sphere, our Lord may be ignorant in respect of such as come nearest to its boundaries, and that not only while He is sinless, but also while He is divine. It is of the last importance to bear this truth always in remembrance. For what is the alternative if we will not admit so much? must we not conclude with Theodoret and so many of the early fathers¹, "if our Lord knew the day, and wishing to conceal it, said He was ignorant, what a blasphemy is the result! Truth tells an untruth." Who

¹ See Colenso *On Pentateuch*, Part III. p. xxxvi.

would venture to insinuate such a thing, unless he thought, or at least had a dim suspicion, that finiteness in itself was an evil? And even then, see at what a price we should purchase the Lord's exemption from finiteness. We should be enabled to assert His exemption from what has been called metaphysical evil—a kind of evil which the conscience fails entirely to recognize—only by affirming His commission of moral evil, of that evil which is at once recognized to be such, wherever there is a human being to pass judgment.

And what, let us ask, is this figment of the speculative mind (called metaphysical evil,) to avoid the imputation of which many seem willing to make such serious sacrifice of moral principle? It seems to be very generally imagined that there is meant by it a particular species of that which by common consent is acknowledged to be evil. And if this were its true nature then would it be absolutely necessary to deprecate and resist its imputation to our blessed Redeemer. But it is in truth no such thing. It is merely an intellectual conception which, involving no moral element whatever, has been improperly named evil by certain metaphysicians.

We saw last Sunday that all the various developments of evil might be referred to selfishness as their central principle; that selfishness which re-

fusing to give itself in love first to God and then in Him to His creatures, determined to keep itself, and all of the worldly means of delight which it could gather together, merely to administer to self-satisfaction. If this be a correct description of the essence of evil, then clearly mere finiteness, mere limitation cannot be evil, for instead of springing out of any spontaneous act of the self it is imposed upon the self from without.

Indeed, in order to regard finiteness even under the modified aspect of that which had better not be, we must look upon it from the point of view of the Idealistic Pantheist. Hegel and Schelling, for instance, represent the finite (man and nature) as the mere outward forms in which the Absolute seeks to realize itself; but, because these forms must ever be inadequate to its full expression, therefore Schelling calls them "an inappropriate form of the Infinite¹," and in that sense evil. So again, looking at the same matter from the subjective side, Hegel holds that because "the finite spirit feels the need in itself of having the absolute truth, this of itself implies that the subject stands in untruth...recognizing this, it recognizes itself as evil, and stands in discord with itself, with God and with the world²." And yet according to him this evil is necessary and eternal. For, looking on the matter objectively, it is

¹ Dorner, Vol. v. p. 106.

² Dorner, Vol. v. p. 132.

only through the inadequacy of finite forms to its expression, that the Absolute perpetually absorbs those forms¹ in order to posit itself afresh. If the visible should ever be adequate to the ideal the pulse of the world-movement would stop, the life of God would cease, nothing would be left but abstract being, unconscious, inert, dead.

And so again², looking at the matter subjectively, man advances from naturalness to moral consciousness by the fall. The sense of discord, or rather the thought of discord, between his felt limitation and the absolute truth which he aspires to, impels him ever to seek the Absolute. This consciousness of his inadequacy to the ideal is evil, and it is possible that the evil may be so far aggravated that he may even seek to abide in this undesirable personal distinctness. This, which Christians might call the desire of immortality, Hegel designates "the extreme point of the finite³," which is his closest determination of evil. But, again, he tells us that evil is necessary to the moral vitality of the subject. It was necessary to the beginning of his moral life, and it is equally necessary to its continuance. Should he ever realize that to which he aspires, he would

¹ Dorner, Vol. v. p. 146.

² See Müller, *Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Vol. I. pp. 432, 433.

³ Müller, p. 433.

perish, lost in that which he has found. Thus the creature, nay, even the Absolute Himself, is condemned to seek for ever that which he can never attain except at the penalty of self-annihilation. And thus all life, human and divine, is converted into an endless procession of shadows, a universe of dreams, an eternally resultless effort, a dreary, hapless, meaningless round of mere sights and noises, a gorgeous procession to an empty shrine, the convulsion of a universe to bring forth merely convulsions. Well may Hegel exclaim, in a kind of frenzy of admiration of this impotent time-process of his own creation, "Only from the cup of this kingdom of spirits, which in the endless perishing of every individual is equally the true kingdom of shadows, there foams to Him his own infiniteness." One cannot help admiring the marvellous power with which this dreamer fashions his dreams, labouring with all the skill and energy of a waking worker, as though he were some mighty magician building cities of gorgeous palaces out of the sunset clouds. And yet all the time our mind and conscience tell us that his creations are merely show, that the gold and amber and crimson will fade away, that court and cloister, pillar and architrave, spire and battlement will dissolve into the void inane, and, like another "beauteous pageant faded," "leave not a rack behind."

But if indeed this theory be so baseless, if it be met by a recognition so hesitating on the part of the understanding, by a condemnation so unhesitating and decisive on the part of the conscience, how foolish then must those appear who would throw doubt upon the essential purity of our Redeemer's character, rather than admit that His humanity was finite, and therefore according to the idealists gnostically evil.

There still however remains another question to be considered before we can feel that we have surveyed the whole range of our subject, for there are some who, while admitting the real limitation of our Lord's human nature as well in knowledge as in power and extension, yet hold with a prelate of the Church, eminent for his theological attainments, that there is an essential distinction between ignorance and error, between not knowing and wrong knowing, and that while it is proper to affirm the former of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is erroneous to attribute to Him the latter. Now it must be remembered that in our consideration of the general question, "how far and in what direction can a limitation of knowledge be consistent with sinlessness," we were led to conclude of some things, as of the manner of a plant's growth, or of the remoter details of history, that not only ignorance, but even the reception of an inaccurate statement, might be compatible with

perfect sinlessness. And surely to imagine, without Scriptural authority, a perpetual miraculous interference of the Divine nature to prevent the operation of this law in our Saviour's human nature, is to imagine a miracle without either authority or necessity. For in respect to all merely formal matters, which as objects of knowledge would not excite the moral activity, it must have been perfectly indifferent, so far as our Lord's moral character was concerned, whether He received and adopted a perfectly correct, or a partially incorrect account of them, so long as that account was given on the authority of persons or writings whose testimony was in general reliable. Thus in those books of the Old Testament to which our Lord gave a general sanction, and the very words and images of which He sometimes employed, mistaken representations of physical facts were not only inevitable but even meritorious. It was the object of the sacred writers to reveal spiritual truth, to make men understand their spiritual relations to God and to their fellow-creatures, and to exhibit to them the inevitable consequences of mistaking or abusing those relations. But of course in order to attain this end they must secure an intelligible basis for their explanations they must seek, like all teachers, to explain the unknown by means of the known. Now, how could they have accomplished such an object if they had

been compelled to assume in the Jews of the eighth century before Christ, the scientific knowledge, not only of the 19th century after Christ, but of that far-distant generation (if such a generation may ever be) whose knowledge shall correspond as nearly to the fact, as the powers of the human mind are capable of making our subjective representations approximate in formal and substantial adequacy to the objective reality. Clearly, in order to accomplish their spiritual object it was necessary for them to take the current, if mistaken, notions of their own time as the matter of their illustrations. And so indeed must the Lord Himself have acted, unless we assume that, being less spiritual than His heralds the prophets, He subordinated spiritual usefulness to formal accuracy. We may thus see, I think, that imperfect representations as to matters non-moral were not only possible, but actually inevitable in our Lord's teaching.

I cannot however refrain from noticing in this connexion how strikingly in His ordinary teaching our Saviour selects those illustrations which, while they are objectively most adequate, are at the same time subjectively most comprehensible, and least likely to be the subject or occasion of mistakes. Science had not distinctly pronounced in that day that life, even in the humblest weed of the field, was an essentially higher and more mysterious thing

than the grand or terrible aspects of nature; that the meanest mollusc which clung to the subaqueous rock, was a higher proof of creative might and wisdom, than the mere mechanical laying down of those enormous piles of unconscious matter, which oppress the untutored imagination by their bulk and vastness. And yet, even in that age, to illustrate those mysteries of the Divine life which are wonderful rather to soul than to sense,—not for the mere outward and vulgar illusions of weight and extension which impose on the feelings of the child or the savage, but rather for those inward and spiritual verities of love and righteousness which appear to the saint and the sage as the essentially eternal and divine; to illustrate these (surely by that all-penetrating spiritual intuition which sees at once the true nature of the thing to be explained, and of the thing to explain it) the Lord takes those simple and living things which are likest to them in essence and development; the green blade of the field, and the modest wild flower of the glen, those gentler and simpler friends of our childhood whose very aspect reminds us of innocence and home. My brethren, which are the things in the Bible we love most now, which are the things to which we turn in our maturity of manhood, in the heat and toil of our mid-day task, for strength and teaching and comfort? Not to the glowing visions of the seers of old, not to those awful

symbols which blaze like the letters of doom over the darkness of the future. No, but (after the sweet tales of home and human love, of the Prodigal and the Good Samaritan) to the story of the sower singing at his labour under the bright sky of a Syrian spring ; of the seed scattered wide over the various soil of the half-cultivated field, with its hard-beaten path, and its clusters of prickly weed, and its patches of thin light soil, which barely cover the intrusive rock ; of the early springing of the green blade, and its various fortunes as the summer wears away into the welcome harvest-time, and the good ground is at length made manifest by the thick waving of its golden grain ! My brethren, as we ponder the deep mysteries of our inner life in the light of this beautiful parable ; the Divine force of the heavenly seed ; the goodness of Him who gives His sun and rain to nourish it ; and withal, the solemn truth, that as the soil is, so is the harvest ; do we not feel that we have been brought into the very sanctuary of our spiritual being, and that we have discerned there the presence of God, in the still small voice, as we never could do in the thunder and lightning and earthquake of the ages that went before ?

The same lesson is surely impressed upon us by observing the manner in which our Saviour refers to the grander and more striking phenomena of nature ; for here, again, we miss the hyperbolical expressions

of an earlier time, those subjective exaggerations which were to be expected, when the souls of imperfect men were labouring under the stress of an inspiration to which their nature was inadequate! Our Lord does not tell us, for instance, like the Psalmist, that the sun “cometh like a bridegroom out of his chamber,” and “rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race,” but simply that our Divine Father “maketh His sun to shine upon the evil and the good.” There is however no affectation of science here, we are not to suppose that this objective cast of speech in our Lord’s illustrations, arose from a reticence designedly imposed in order to avoid scientific inaccuracies. That were to miss the deep spiritual truth in a vapid and spiritless literalism. No, this grand objectivity in our blessed Master’s regard of the outward world is due to that Imperial intuition of the inner truth and nature of things, which (existing in lower degree in the greatest poets as a faint internal shadow of the Highest) found in Him its absolute perfection. Thus we are pointed again to the conclusion at which we arrived before, that our Lord’s spiritual greatness consisted, not so much in the extent of His knowledge as in the power of His intuition ; not in discerning those actual and temporal developments of the forms of things, which might have occurred in a thousand different directions without injury to the truth which they expressed ; but rather in seizing at

once the essential characteristics of that eternal Truth which cannot change, from which to depart even in the least would be to fall into objective falsehood !

There is yet another special difficulty to be considered ; not that it is intrinsically more formidable than others, or that the general theory which I have just stated is less directly or more incompletely applicable for its solution, but simply because it is one which is exciting at present no little attention ; I mean the question whether our Lord could cite as the production of one author, words which were written by another. It is best to put the case first with the most perfect generality. Remembering, then, the distinctively spiritual object of our Lord's life and teaching, can we conceive Him expending His energy and occupying His time upon questions purely critical and antiquarian ; as to who for instance was the author of this fragment, or the compiler of that ; in what age such an error was made by a copyist, or which of two disputed readings was to be found in an ancient manuscript ; whether a number had been exaggerated here, or a sentence interpolated there ? And yet, unless we assume without authority or necessity the occurrence of a perpetual miracle in the course of our Lord's human development, we must admit that with relation to facts which, being of a merely formal kind, were not

the proper objects of moral or spiritual intuition, He must have sought information in the ordinary way. But if from the nature of such facts we can neither assume on the one hand that they could be perceived by direct intuition, nor on the other that from their comparative unimportance they would seem worthy to form the objects of effort and attention, we may safely conclude that (especially in an uncritical age) such questions never came into our Lord's human consciousness as objects of judgment or contemplation.

But it is alleged that He distinctly affirmed, "Moses wrote of me;" and the question is thereupon raised, "was it possible that Christ should mislead us as to those teachers who went before Him?" We must ask, in reply, what is meant by such a question? If it is asked whether Christ would consciously say that which He knew to be false, we must of course answer at once in the negative? But then we must add, it is the very matter in dispute whether He did know who were the authors of the passages of Scripture to which He made allusion? We may be able to prove that He did, but at least in conducting an argument it is quite unallowable to assume it. Now, speaking in general, and without any reference to existing theories, we must admit in the first place, as established by our Lord's own statement in the text, and as implied in the very conception of sinlessness,

that He could not think that anything was spoken by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which was really not so spoken. But if the question be asked, did the Holy Ghost communicate some particular passage (which is admitted to have been given by His inspiration) through the lips of this or that individual ? though we have no business to say that our Lord could not have answered such a question as that, yet clearly the idea of His sinlessness does not require that He should have been able to do so.

Still, if the question had been definitely put to Him, did such an author write such a passage ? we should certainly expect either an indication that it was not proper to expect an answer, or a declaration of His own ignorance, or, in fine, a positive expression of opinion, for the correctness of which His truthfulness would be responsible. Such a question, as to the time of His coming, actually drew from Him the acknowledgment that "the times and the seasons the Father had put in His own power," and that of that day and that hour the Son Himself had no knowledge ! What might have been His reply had the former question been put to Him, none can tell ; but this we can tell, that the authorship of a particular passage is a thing as formal and unessential in its nature, as the day and hour of the appointed judgment, and that our Lord might have been as ignorant of the former as He undoubtedly

was of the latter without incurring the imputation of moral darkness or sinfulness.

If then we are asked to determine whether, in such a passage as St John v. 46, our Saviour decides for the Mosaic authorship of the whole of the Pentateuch when He says, “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me;” we must ask ourselves, how far is it probable that such a question was presented in the Lord’s consciousness as this,—Was Moses the actual author of the whole of those books which are commonly attributed to him? If it be our impression, from the general tone and connexion of the narrative, that such a question never presented itself to our Saviour’s mind with that degree of clearness which might cause Him to pay attention to it, then the words determine nothing in the supposed connexion; if otherwise, they do.

I have not hitherto contemplated such a case as that imagined by Bishop Colenso, and therefore I must endeavour to put it clearly, and answer it to some extent independently. It will be sufficient for our purpose to consider his theory of the authorship and composition of the book of Deuteronomy, a book which is three times quoted by our Saviour, at one of the most trying seasons of His life, as of decisive and Divine authority. Bishop Colenso’s theory is¹, that moved by the universal impiety and immorality

¹ Part III. p. 427.

which prevailed in Judah in the early days of Josiah, the prophet Jeremiah conceived that if he could write an account of the early fortunes of Israel which, while it purported to be the work of Moses, should directly condemn the sins which he deplored, such a work might exert a powerful influence for good. He pondered this idea, it is supposed, until it took in his mind the form of a Divine command, and that thus the conviction of a heavenly commission, banished at length all those scruples, which doubtless the first contemplation of such a forgery must have suggested. The design is supposed to have succeeded, partly through the dense ignorance of the people, and partly through the complicity of the prophetess Huldah in the plot. Now, of the supposed critical justification of such theories as this, I will only say, that as already Bishop Colenso's constructive speculations are becoming daily more untenable in the light of critical examination, I look upon his negative and destructive results, not only without alarm, but with the confident hope that, deplorable as they are in themselves, they will be made the instrument of much good to the Church, by furnishing that stimulus to the critical study of the Hebrew Scriptures which has been so long required. But our concern at present is rather with the moral suggestions than with the critical foundation of the theory which I have sketched. And con-

sidering the supposed origin of the book of Deuteronomy in the light of the fundamental axioms of morality, surely it is hard to believe that such a man as the prophet Jeremiah deliberately put the words of that book into the mouth of Moses, when he knew that they were nothing more than the utterances of his own mind; and harder still to suppose that he could excuse such deception, on the plea that the impulse to sacrifice truth to expediency came from the Holy Ghost.

How could a prophet persuade himself that the suggestion to utter a falsehood came from the Spirit of Truth? or, if this be conceivable, if he whose office it was above all things to denounce falsehood could himself be so fundamentally untrue, what are we to think of those prophecies which, as he imagined, were revealed to Him by the Most High? Either we must admit that the Spirit of God sanctioned, nay, if one may reverently even express such an alternative, that He abetted a proceeding whose exact description is that it was a "doing evil that good might come," or on the other hand that Jeremiah's confident persuasion is no evidence that he spoke by inspiration. The latter supposition, though it might lightly be made perhaps by Bishop Colenso, would nevertheless degrade the prophecies of Scripture to a place far below that of the works of pious men amongst ourselves; and moreover must involve

the belief that our Lord quoted as of Divine authority, words which had no better origin than the fond persuasion of a not-over-scrupulous enthusiast.

Bishop Colenso suggests that the book was composed to put down idolatry; but now suppose that the forgery had been found out, what effect would have been produced on the people when the adherents of idolatry scornfully pointed to the fact that the great prophet of Jehovah had pretended (very much after the manner of our own poor poet Chatterton) to have found a book which in reality he had himself written? Would not the effect have been to cover the inventors with confusion, and to convince people that the spirit of prophecy was no better than a lying divination? And why would such an effect have been produced—why would the discovery of such a deed have been looked upon as a triumph by the adversary? Why, but because he would have been sure that the universal conscience of mankind must recognize it at once as an inexcusable imposture¹? And was then the fraud less flagitious because it remained undiscovered, or was the prophet's sensitiveness to moral evil so much blunter than that of the men of his own time, that nothing less than universal reprobation could have convinced him of his sin? If not, then surely we must own that if Jeremiah perpetrated such a for-

¹ See Dr Kay's *Crisis Hupfeldiana*, p. 67 and p. 87.

gery as has been imagined, he did it with the consciousness of iniquity !

But if this be the true state of the case, then the question will have to be asked, Could our Lord quote as given by Divine Inspiration words which proceeded from the lips of a man who was conscious of transgression even while he uttered them ? Granting that their source was so impure, must not our Lord have detected their essential falsehood during that preliminary study which had made Him so familiar with them ? Could it require any critical or philosophical skill to discover the moral taint which must have pervaded such a composition throughout ? There can be but one answer to such a question, and that answer must be adverse to Bishop Colenso.

But let me remind you, my brethren, as arising directly out of our consideration of this case, of the importance not only of arriving at right conclusions, but of reaching these by the application of right principles. A man may often lay the foundation for a wider divergence from truth, by securing one true position on false principles, than if he had lost that position by holding fast the true principles which seemed to make it untenable. In the latter case he would only have fallen into error on a particular point, in the former he would have carried an element of error into the whole contents of his thinking. It may thus be true that particular theories of

Bishop Colenso are irreconcileable with the confession of our Redeemer's sinlessness, but this is not because a critical or archæological mistake would necessarily involve the loss of that sinlessness. Our Lord's greatness, as we have seen, was eminently and peculiarly spiritual. As Lange has eloquently said, "His whole life was developed in God, as one prayer of infinite depth, one deep sigh for the world's salvation, one loud hallelujah for the saving love manifesting itself in His own heart, one continual Amen of obedience to the will of His heavenly Father."

Let the spectacle of this life teach us, my brethren, the necessary condition, the central element of all true greatness. We do not live merely to think, or, as the Idealists tell us, in thinking and by thinking. No, but on the other hand, moral and spiritual life is the necessary foundation, the essential pre-requisite of all productive thought. Neither the possession of equal intellectual power, nor the inheritance of all the intellectual wealth of former ages, will enable races which have advanced to a certain stage of moral decay to reflect the noble creations of the past. No, the voice of history pronounces with clear tone and decisive emphasis, that moral purity is the indispensable pre-requisite of intellectual creativeness, the source and basis of all true progression. There is only one thing which is

good in itself, which, however largely bestowed, can never become the source of temptation to *any* man; viz. that which Scripture calls eternal life, that life which manifests itself in spiritual love and moral purity, and which is hid with Christ in God. Wealth may be possessed in excess, intellect may, knowledge, power, influence may, but the life of Christ, because it is essentially holy, cannot be. It may be, nay it sometimes must be our duty, when asking for any of the former, to desire them only if they would be good for us. But it can never be necessary to pray for an increase of the life of Christ conditionally, or to ask of it only a limited portion. It is God's will, it is for our good, that we should be filled with it, and hence that we should pray, with the large and unrestrained confidence of St Paul, "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith," "that being rooted and grounded in love, we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and depth and length and height," that "we may know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge," and "be filled with all the fulness of God." Yea, my brethren, that we be "filled with all the fulness of God." It is good to be manly and pure, to bear a bold heart, and to subdue the mean and selfish lusts of the flesh by strenuous labour and healthy exercise; praying always for that heavenly grace without which all toil and watchfulness are vain. It is good to lead a sober

wholesome life, the life of a true English gentleman, enriched by wisdom and truth, softened by thoughts and deeds of Christian charity. But there is a still higher life than this, a life which can alone form and inspire the men whom England, whom Christendom so sorely needs. And I know that there are amongst you spirits of a nobler type, who can see already beneath the weltering chaos of social disruption and religious unbelief, the elements of a new creation fashioning themselves together, yea growing up already out of the wild watery waste as the fair and beautiful continents of a new and a better world ; as the strong abodes of a purer and a Christian civilization, which shall develop in ever more beautiful forms, on ever securer foundations, as age returns upon age !

My brethren, a mighty future awaits the Church of Christ ; even we can discern its outlines who in middle life are toiling in the thick of the confusion, seeking with failing hands and half-emancipated minds to shape that future to your hands. Many of us feel our own unfitness ; wasted opportunities, inadequate culture, inherited prejudices, these all hamper and cripple us. The work needs better men than we. It needs men who have grappled in solemn earnest with the difficulties of the times, who by a diligent prayerful progress in all godly learning have been able to see how the Gospel of Christ meets

and disperses such difficulties, and who out of a mind stored with sacred knowledge and burning with Christian love, shall advance to the battle of the future, with a cry as loud and glad as that which burst of old from the armies of triumphant Israel—a cry at which the embattled walls of evil shall fall down flat, so that the hosts of the Lord may go up straight before them to the destruction of the destroyers of the world. It is a great work, and it demands great qualities in those who would be counted worthy of it. It demands long and patient labour in a self-chosen obscurity; it demands wide proficiency in all the deepest knowledge of the time, and through all and in all, as their life and inspiration, an ever deepening knowledge of Christ as the Life and Atonement of this sinful world. And then, when all these are gained, it asks a humility so deep that it shall esteem itself unfeignedly the least of all and the servant of all—the simple instrument of Christ, the almost unconscious minister of grace. It is much, you will say, to require; yes, but think of what is needed—men, who if God accept and bless their humble self-consecration shall be able in the divine strength to roll back the tide of human sin and misery, yea, to lay the deep foundations of the glorious city of God, and to hasten the coming of the promised kingdom! There are, who in the strength of Christ might be made sufficient even for

these things. May He in His mercy send such men to His fainting Church, yea, and grant, of His infinite grace, that they may be even chosen from among you !

SERMON I.

SERMON I.

1 COR. II. 13, 14.

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

THE work of the Spirit may be considered either with reference to the several offices of the Divine Agent by whom it is accomplished, or the different relations, individual and corporate, of the subjects in whom it is displayed. It may be conceived of with most perfect generality in connexion with all the offices of the Spirit, as these are exercised for the benefit of the whole church ; more particularly with reference to one of those offices in connexion with the same general community ; and more particularly

still in reference to one of the same offices in relation to the individual Christian. Of these different modes of regarding the ministrations of the Spirit, that to which I desire to call your attention to-day is the one last mentioned; I propose, that is, to consider the work of the Spirit as it affects the individual Christian, and as it is displayed in the particular form of Divine guidance and illumination.

Now the teaching of the Holy Spirit is of two kinds, ordinary and extraordinary, usual and exceptional, by revelation explicitly, and by secret intuition implicitly. You will see by reference to the place where they occur that the words of my text apply equally to both these methods of Divine instruction, for St Paul is at once speaking of his own “speech and preaching” which were “in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”—words which the Holy Ghost teacheth—and also of that spiritual discernment by which his brethren in common with himself “might know the things which were freely given to them of God.” Let us endeavour, then, in the light of this passage to consider the two different kinds of Divine teaching, the ordinary and extraordinary, in their contrasts and connexions; how they differ from each other, and how they mutually pre-suppose and supplement each other.

We must begin by special reference to the extraordinary teaching of the Spirit, since at least, when

we have reference to the Christian, all ordinary teaching pre-supposes the existence of this. If it be certain that to the perception of Divine truth we need the immediate illumination of the Spirit, it is equally so that we need the instrumentality of the word of life which is the means by which the Spirit ordinarily instructs us. Considering then, first, the contents of the word, we are told in the text (at least according to the most probable rendering of it), that the "Spirit interprets spiritual things to spiritual men." We learn, however, the same thing from the fourteenth verse. The things of the Spirit of God, the things which form the matter of his teaching, are those which the natural man cannot receive—those opposed to natural tastes and lusts. We thus conclude that the contents of the extraordinary teaching of the Holy Ghost are distinctively of a spiritual character.

A most important principle is involved in this statement, a principle which it will be of special service to us in these days to remember. For while it is of course to be admitted that the quickening of the soul is the quickening of all its powers, so that even in relation to secular matters the understanding may be strengthened to comprehend them, yet it must never be forgotten that it is not the special office of the Spirit to disclose matters of fact or science. If then it be objected that true science is

not taught in the Bible, let it be answered at once that the Bible only professes to be a record of the teaching of the Spirit: and that the Spirit reveals those things which cannot be understood by the merely natural man. Now physical science can be understood by such men; they often delight in it, and always applaud it, for while it calls on them to forego none of their carnal pleasures, it may easily be made to minister to the two master-sins of unregenerate human nature, viz. self-satisfaction and self-indulgence. How can it be expected, then, that the Bible should contain instruction in science, that it should pursue an object totally foreign to the purpose of its composition? The Spirit teaches the mysteries of Redemption, and in doing so uses the secular knowledge of the generation addressed as the only intelligible or even possible medium of instruction. They are therefore not to be heard who pretend that they find in the lively images and pregnant metaphors of Holy Writ so many anticipations of the most striking discoveries of modern science. An intelligent objector can perceive at once that the supposed connexion is of their own devising; that, comparing the sacred image with the natural fact, their own ingenuity has created the boasted resemblance; and he is often thus led to suspect that similar ingenuity may have created many of those other correspondences to eternal facts

which beyond all doubt are purposely and explicitly indicated in the Bible. There is also another grave evil connected with such unwarrantable inferences, that though they may spring from a most pious reverence for the word of God, from a reverence so deep that it would fain feel its indebtedness to the Word, not only for the best, but for all knowledge, yet are they directly and inevitably, if unconsciously and undesignedly, productive of general irreverence. For such a method of treatment invites the ungodly and profane to suppose that the Word of God is within the sphere of their ordinary investigations; that its meaning can be ascertained by their methods, and through the power of their unassisted and unsanctified understanding; thus often leading them to say and publish things which would perhaps never have been suggested to them, if its zealous and mistaken friends had not first degraded the Bible to the sphere of physical speculation. Let us remember that it is not the object of the Bible to reveal the secrets of science, nay, that it would have been undesirable to deprive the human intellect of a healthy stimulus to exertion by anticipating discoveries which it was naturally competent to make; and that since such a revelation would have been unnecessary it is therefore inconceivable.

Again, the assertion that the Holy Ghost teaches

“spiritual things,” implies that facts, considered only as external phenomena, form no part of the proper contents of revelation. The Spirit of God reveals the spiritual and eternal meaning of facts, the spiritual and divine relations of persons. Given that such things are, the Spirit of illumination will teach us what they are; given that such words have been spoken, it will teach us what they mean; but, though intimating by the very act of interpretation that the account interpreted is substantially correct, it should not be expected from its nature and aim to point out in detail whether this or that word has been mistaken or interpolated.

May not this principle, if cautiously and reverently applied, guide us to a better understanding of certain perplexing phenomena of inspiration? It is the office of the Spirit to teach “spiritual things,” and “holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

Suppose, then, a man inspired to declare God’s will about events which happened in his own time, on what in them would his gaze be fixed? On their historical or spiritual aspect? Manifestly on the latter alone. Looking through the superficial and delusive appearance, and neglecting all that was scientifically curious, the man filled with the Holy Ghost would penetrate with an eye divinely purged and enlightened to their spiritual significance. He

would tell how they appeared before God, how they were related to His purpose and kingdom, what was the nature of their real influence, what was their course to their predestined end ; seeing them through Divine illumination as they really were in the present, he would see them as they must become hereafter. If such a man faithfully represented what he saw, what he was shown, he must omit much in the events he described which others would think essentially characteristic of them ; he must tell much which no man but himself would see ; and for both these reasons the man of God would seem to the man of sense to speak darkly and imperfectly. No wonder that the latter should often find such a history as this inconsistent and incredible ; for its words are not those which man's heart understands : it presupposes tastes and faculties which the natural man does not possess ; and because he feels this, because he cannot escape this conviction, he would rather deny the Divine original of the Bible than acknowledge his own carnal blindness !

But suppose that such an inspired representation of events as I have described were afterwards quoted by another sacred writer. This supposition is admissible, for we know that many passages of the historical Scriptures are quoted from the Book of Jasher, the Book of the Wars of the Lord, the Book of Nathan the Prophet, the Book of Gad the seer,

and other earlier inspired records. No one has ever been hardy enough to suppose that God circumstantially revealed to Moses all the transactions in the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that all those inimitable stories of home and pilgrimage, of sorrow and exultation, of temptation and victory, passed before the rapt prophet in a vivid visionary drama; and if not, assuredly he must have quoted from existing authentic materials.

Now it is clear that in the course of ages any of those older records might have been slightly altered in transcription, or rendered obscure by abbreviation, unless we suppose the intervention of a perpetual miracle to do for the older Scriptures what has palpably not been done for the later. And hence, too, mistakes of detail might be perpetuated by inspired men quoting such accounts, unless we suppose again, without the authority of Scripture, and in contradiction to the analogy of God's general dealings, that a special miracle would be wrought to show to the inspired penman, while he was quoting it, the mistake of an unimportant detail in an account which was substantially correct. If we keep in mind that the Spirit teaches "spiritual things," such a supposition would be simply incredible; for so long as an account was substantially true, the relation of God's real dealings with real men, those external and spiritually unimportant particulars, are just the things that would be neglected.

Again, on the supposition that no minute errors had crept into the ancient record during its transmission, should we always expect the sacred writer to quote with literal exactness from the account which he actually possessed? He would be faithful, no doubt, in relating the fact, faithful in declaring the Divine view of it, but not slavishly particular in the literal correspondence of details, because “the Spirit teacheth spiritual things.” And, moreover, let us remember in connexion with this point, that the earlier forms of revelation must often have retained the marks, not only of the circumstances, but also of the infirmities of the past. For since the object of spiritual teaching is to make spiritual men, and primarily to make those men spiritual who were immediately addressed, it would plainly be necessary to communicate truth, not in the form most adequate to its perfect expression, but in that most suitable to its effective impartation. And thus when endeavouring to arrive at the substantial and permanent truth contained in a passage of the Old Testament, we must plainly take account of the circumstances and capacity of those to whom it was originally addressed. We must remember, for instance, in connexion with the Jewish law of divorce, that “for the hardness of the people’s hearts Moses gave them this commandment,” and that thus, though the law contained a fundamental truth (viz. that divorce under

certain circumstances was agreeable to the will of God), yet the particular form under which the law was made to express itself in that age was determined by the actual spiritual condition of the people. The same consideration must likewise determine our estimate of a truth which is expressed in the peculiar mental or sensible images employed at a particular period. Thus, when the Psalmist is inspired by the Holy Ghost to record the righteousness of the Divine retribution on oppressors, the truth is fundamental and eternal, but the form under which the accomplishment of that retribution is conceived, viz. the dashing of children against the stones, the form of the thought is determined by the feelings and circumstances of the Psalmist's age. Retribution on the oppressor was to come by means of war; and since in that age these barbarities were the usual accessories of war, they were necessarily the form under which war was presented in the vision of the prophet. If the perpetration of such atrocities would unfit a people to be the instrument of God's righteous judgment on oppressors, then assuredly Isaiah is open to rebuke for calling the Assyrians "the rod of God's anger," since in the existing state of things they would inevitably accomplish the Divine judgment by the employment of such means.

But to deny that spiritual truth can be revealed through imperfect forms, is to assert in effect that

such truth cannot be revealed at all, unless it be always presented in that form which is the best and completest possible. And thus it is to object to much which may be thought formally imperfect in the teaching of your Lord Himself, since it is evident that even He did not seek to convey truth in the form most absolutely adequate to its expression, but rather in that which was most likely to arouse spiritual activity in His hearers. He did not aim to crystallize truth in dead immovable images—dead, whatever their objective beauty, if their loveliness could not be felt and appreciated by living hearts; but rather to transfuse it into the spirit of his hearers through whatever media of communication might be found most suitable to them. “His doctrine was not,” as Neander has finely said, “to be propagated as a lifeless stock of tradition, but to be received as a living spirit by willing minds.” The living truth was to be got into men’s hearts by any means whatsoever, and it is evident that for this end the form which was objectively best and most adequate might be subjectively worst and least efficient.

This comparative depreciation of the temporary forms of truth is again manifested in the striking fact that Christ did not transmit His doctrine to after-ages in a treatise or narrative written by Himself. If it had been of prime importance to give the perfect contents of His teaching in a perfect shape it

would be impossible to conceive that He should have left the record of His words to others! But could it be of prime importance? Yea, would it have been at all good for us to be sure not only of the Divine nature and origin of Gospel truth, but also of the Divine fashioning of the form in which it was expressed? Might not such an assurance have been a temptation to us to rest satisfied with the letter, and to sink into listless acquiescence in the mere words of a revelation, which in that case would have offered little incentive to enquiry and little scope for examination?

But if the form of truth even in Divine lips must ever bear the mark of man's circumstances and imperfections, can we wonder that in quoting words addressed to an earlier and more carnal generation the sacred writers should often look rather to the essence of the truth than to its clothing, and that they should sometimes therefore neglect, in their reproduction of it, minor details of fact, and unessential forms of conception? Do not the Apostles, for instance, shew us in their free quotations from an inexact version of the Old Testament, how possible it is to convey the spiritual meaning of a passage even more truly and adequately by an occasional variation from its words, than if these had been reproduced fully and literally?

Consider the historical portions of the Old Testa-

ment in the light of these conclusions, and you will not, I think, be astonished to meet in them here and there with what is difficult or apparently inconsistent, but will rather wonder at that Guardian Providence which has preserved in such singular purity, through all the vicissitudes of time and fortune, what was originally communicated by God for the instruction and comfort of men.

And if you wish for assurance that amid all the dangers of error there actually has been preserved to us the true history of God's dealings, and the authentic report of God's words, then examine the sacred records in the larger spirit of investigation which distinguishes our great historians. Do not pause upon a phrase, or enlarge upon a number, but advance to the heart of the account. Think of its simplicity, of its naturalness, of its homeliness, how, like the truest history, it never attempts to theorize about the time, but makes you live in it, and move with it, and feel its spirit, and know its men. Think, again, of the fitnesses to be perceived in it everywhere between speech and station, between time and observance ; of the deep and undesigned coincidences which penetrate it through and through, and bind all its parts inseparably together as by a golden chain of truth.

Yea, think of the facts now existing before your eyes which these records explain, and which nothing

else will. Think, for instance, as Leslie reminds us, of the impossibility that a whole nation should at any period of its history be persuaded to commemorate by a significant festival such a deliverance as that of the Israelites from Egypt, if no such event had ever happened.

Or think, again, of a fact so remarkable as this, that the three monotheistic religions of the world are all derived manifestly from Abraham. The Christian, not less than the Jew, boasts that he is spiritually descended from the great Patriarch ;— the Arab not less than either, points with pride to the same illustrious ancestor. This striking fact has lately arrested the attention of one of our greatest living philologists, who asks in connexion with it, “Did Mohammed invent Monotheism ? He did not even invent a new name for God !” “The faith,” he continues, “in the one living God, which seemed to require the admission of a monotheistic instinct, grafted in every member of the Semitic family, is traced back to one man, to him ‘in whom all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’”

And, now, what is the meaning of this fact, that no man, or race of men, has ever permanently and exclusively lived in a monotheistic faith, except such as have descended naturally or spiritually from Abraham ? Was this man so far above all others that he discerned intuitively what none without him

could? that he not only caught sight of this great truth by fitful gleams as a possible theory (as others might have done), but that he grappled it with such a mighty power of faith, with such an ardour of passionate conviction, that it first burnt out all error in his own soul, and then branded its everlasting mark upon his latest and remotest descendant? Shall we say that this extraordinary result was due to Abraham's exceptional and unapproachable greatness of soul? If we were disposed to do this, his history would rebuke us, for it shows that though great and faithful he was made of quite the ordinary clay, that he could be, yea, on some occasions was, as false and cowardly as any of us!

But if the great discovery were not due to Abraham's innate and transcending superiority of nature, to what shall we say it must be attributed? I cannot better answer that question than in the words of the writer I have already quoted! "If we be asked how this one Abraham passed through the denial of all other gods to the knowledge of the one true God, we are content to answer that it was by a special Divine revelation granted to that one man, and handed down by him to Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans." Would that many who admire so enthusiastically Professor Müller's learning could repeat as firmly this confession of his faith.

If to these considerations it be needful to make

any addition, I would further suggest to you, that it is impossible to deny the substantial credibility of the earlier history of the Jews while we hold in any real or practical sense the doctrine of the Incarnation. I know not, indeed, whether such a denial can be in any way consistent even with the assertion of our Lord's pure humanity, and of his unlimited anointing with the Spirit. For though the circumstances and results of that history into which by His natural birth He was introduced might not be the only source of his spiritual knowledge of the past, yet were they at least the divinely-appointed stimulants to call it forth. And how could they have called it forth in any right direction, if they were themselves altogether false and untrustworthy? how could those stories have led on to God, which while they professed to be the authentic record of his dealings were in reality the impudent and contradictory inventions of men?

But, however this may be, it is manifestly impossible, as I have said, to reconcile such a supposition with any true belief in the Incarnation. And this, not because of any theory as to the inevitable influence over our Saviour's human growth in wisdom, of his Divine omniscience. I allow that, inasmuch as there is only one instance in all experience of the union of the Divine and human natures in a single person, we cannot be competent to determine

how far the omniscience of the Divine nature may be consistent with the sinless mistakes of inevitable human ignorance. But one thing is certain, that if the Divine Son became man, it was determined afore in the eternal covenant of Redemption that He should be born and live and suffer as a member of the covenant people. And can we suppose that the Father would have decreed in His eternal counsels, that the sinless human nature of His eternal Son should be placed in the midst of such false misleading circumstances that His growth in knowledge must of necessity be a growth in error? The more strenuously any one insists on the real ignorance of the man Christ Jesus, the more powerfully he must feel this argument to apply. If our Lord's human ignorance were real, then we assert that the Father placed His Son in circumstances where He could not possibly discover the truth, where error both as to the form and spirit of the past was inevitable, unless we admit that the Scriptures of the Old Testament contain substantially a true account of God's dealings with His people.

Having thus seen some of the consequences which flow from the acknowledgment that spiritual things form the contents of the Spirit's teaching, and some of the reasons why the knowledge of those consequences need in no wise diminish our confidence in the Scriptures; let us now proceed to con-

sider that state of the soul to which our text informs us this teaching is addressed.

The Spirit interprets spiritual things only "to spiritual men." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

This assertion of the Apostle plainly implies that in order to the success of the Spirit's teaching, what are called the extraordinary gifts must be supplemented by the ordinary. Vainly to us will spiritual things be revealed, if the spiritual mind be not prepared within us to receive them. The Spirit speaks through revelation only to those whom He teaches by His secret grace; He unveils the mysteries of Heaven only to the eye which He opens to discern them. Thus, in reference to its great purpose, viz. the enlightenment of the human soul, an objective revelation is imperfect without the subjective operations of the Spirit. This is expressly asserted by the Word itself; for while it declares its own sufficiency under the conditions contemplated and demanded, it very clearly asserts its own insufficiency in that isolated and purely objective form in which men of the world are alone able to regard it. It is indeed the light of the world, but only this when the enlightening Spirit purges the eye to behold it. This independence, and yet intimate relation of the inward and outward teaching of the Holy Spirit, is

what makes it possible for the true Christian to feel the agreement of his own spiritual perception of truth with its divine manifestation in the Word, as an independent testimony to the genuineness of the latter. The Word is the record of the Divine dealings, of the things actually done, and the words actually spoken, in the historical development of redemption ; while, on the other hand, the spiritual perception of the Christian, though it may have been created through the instrumentality of that Word, is still felt afterwards to be a something independent of it. It is the perception, not merely of what has been done and spoken, but of what is fit to be done or spoken, of what is in accordance with the mind of God, of what is the real connexion of any act or word with the principles of His Divine kingdom ; and therefore of what is the effective influence, and ought to be the ultimate issue, of such act or word.

Now, if the Spirit be a Divine Person, this spiritual perception which He has given (even though the Bible might be the instrument in its bestowal) will be in a very real sense independent of that instrument. It does not come from the Bible, but from the Spirit of God. The Christian feels sure of this, for he has the witness of that Spirit within himself ; he feels its grace in his heart, he beholds its operation in his life. He is not led, and comforted, and possessed by a book, or a man, but by a living

Divine Person, who shows him what is the mind of God. It is conceivable, indeed, that the word of some frail, fallible man might have been made the occasion of the new creation within him, and if so he would feel conscious that the Divine gift and guidance which came to him in that new birth, enabled him afterwards to judge independently respecting those very words which were first blessed to his salvation. And in a different degree he feels the same in respect to the sacred Scriptures. He had never been born again, but through those Scriptures; nevertheless, having been endowed with "an unction from the Holy One" which "abides in him," and teaches him of all things, he can now in a certain sense judge independently of the very instrument of his salvation. He does not examine it now, in relation to what are commonly called its internal evidences, in relation, viz. to those deep, all-pervading coincidences of fact which plead so powerfully with the understanding, but in a quite different way. The word of God, as we have seen, does not disclose external phenomena as such, but as the form and clothing of spiritual principles, and Divine relations. It thus records facts in such a way as to be specially an object of criticism to the spiritual faculty, whose very characteristic it is to discern the eternal meaning of facts, their real influences and inevitable results. Now the Bible declares these *to* the soul,

while the Spirit reveals them *in* the soul ; and thus a comparison between these two revelations is possible. Since this is an examination of the very heart of revelation, it must be the most trying test of all, and yet I may fearlessly say that, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual,” the Christian is fundamentally sure that the Bible is “the word of God”—that the men who wrote it wrote it under the teaching of the Spirit, that they spoke, not merely what as pious men they thought and felt, but “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

And, further, a spiritual man not only finds that the representations of the word agree with his own spiritual perceptions, but that they educate these, and supply all their wants ; that in spiritual things the Bible is ever beyond him, ever leading him on, and still as it leads giving him the sense of infinite fulness beyond, ever impressing him, the more he studies it, that it is not only spiritual, but Divine.

Whoever doubts this in the constant and devout perusal of the Sacred Scriptures, whoever doubts it that goes to them for daily bread ? If they were only of man, they would surely tire us as the works of men do; if they were only of man, they would fail to help and lead us as we grew more like Christ.

You know that it is not so ; that to all men, and above all to the most spiritual, they are an ever-flowing fountain of life ; so that even the more spiri-

tual of their adversaries are attracted and charmed by their freshness, and are constrained to confess that they stand alone, alone and yet all-sufficient for every want of our spiritual experience.

For in what circumstances of life or in what states of soul are they ever found wanting? They are simple enough for the foolish, and deep enough for the wise, practical enough for the active, and heavenly enough for the recluse; they are a joy in rejoicing, and a balm in sorrow, strength in weakness, and victory in conflict, light in darkness, and glory in death: the living precious Word of our heavenly Father—what multitudes of hearts has it lifted to Him, what multitudes of earthly pilgrims has it led to Paradise!

Having thus seen, my brethren, what things the Spirit teaches, and to what persons He teaches them, it only remains to remind you, that our individual participation in the blessings we have reviewed depends solely upon ourselves. Christ has purchased for all of us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the Divine Comforter is always present with us, always brooding with creative energy on the dark waters of the soul. We are not therefore to wait till by some special or supernatural manifestation we are convinced that the Spirit is moving us, not to wait as if our Divine Guide and Helper were only like some angel sent specially from time to time to agitate the

waters, but to assume that He is ever efficiently present, ever ready to teach and to sanctify.

And that we may not grieve that Holy Spirit, and provoke Him to depart from us, let us beware of exasperating our hearts by entering into that atmosphere of strife and bitterness where no voice of peace and love can be heard. Let us pray God to make us spiritual men, and to enable us to see, amid all the change and flux of time, amid the growth and decay of nations, the rise and fall of faiths, that one predestined development is ceaselessly progressing, that one Eternal Design is being surely accomplished in the completion of the body of Christ. The present may look dark and gloomy, clouds may lour over our sky, and our hearts may faint at times, through the malice of enemies or the apathy and treachery of friends; but have we not even now, if we be faithful, the foretaste of that blessedness for which we wait, the earnest of that inheritance which lies beyond the darkness? Do we not feel even now, within the prison of our narrow bodily existence, the richness of that same Divine Love whose fulness rejoices the glorified? Do we not see, even now, through the baffling dimness of time, the ever-brightening glory of that same Divine manifestation whose immediate essence, and complete unveiling, are the sun and life of the city of our rest?

Oh! that the heavenly messenger who revealed

to the prophet's servant the burning chariots of God would open our blind eyes to the glory of the present Spirit, of that Spirit who is even now in our midst "to intercede for us with groanings which cannot be uttered!" May He manifest Himself to you, my brethren, with a double measure of His sanctifying grace, resting on you, now and ever, as "the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."

SERMON II.

2 PETER I. 21.

*Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man,
but holy men of God spake as they were moved
by the Holy Ghost.*

IN the earlier part of my experience as a Christian minister, the portion of the Bible which I least understood, and was therefore most reluctant to expound, was that which contains the writings of the prophets. Accepting the commonly-received theory of prophetic interpretation, I found so much in that portion of the Divine Word which was hopelessly obscure, so much which seemed only to be a demand for historical knowledge, or an exercise for antiquarian ingenuity, that much as I blamed myself for the feeling, I could not banish the impression that the prophetical books as a whole were less useful than other parts of Sacred Scripture. That impression while it lasted was so painful, and its influence on the study of prophecy so paralyzing, that for the sake of those young men who may be

assailed by the same, or even more formidable difficulties, I have thought it desirable to vindicate, on the present occasion, the line of investigation which finally and completely removed it.

So far is prophecy from being simply "history written before the time," that it may retain its fundamental character, without containing any prophecies at all. A prophet, in the widest sense of the word, is one who was enabled through a divinely imparted intuition, to perceive and declare the real nature of events and God's will respecting them, either in the present or the future. This view of prophecy may be gathered at once from St Paul's representation of the prophetic office in the fourteenth chapter of his 1st epistle to the Corinthians, and is besides explained and supported, by the history of the origin and progress of the prophetical schools under the Old Dispensation.

Neglecting the earlier and more occasional displays of prophetic endowment, it may be stated generally, that prophecy in its established and formal character begins with Samuel. This great prophet organized and perpetuated the prophetic activity which was manifested amongst the chosen people, by means of regular institutions called "schools of the prophets." It was not the object of these schools to dictate presumptuously to Jehovah how, or in what measure, or at what times, or to what persons,

the prophetic gift should be imparted, but to furnish, so to speak, a fitting soil, upon which, when it pleased God to speak to His people, He might sow the seed of the prophetic word. The time of Moses was one of those great eras in the development of salvation, when, by the overruling grace of God, the age has been made ripe for the reception of important and extensive revelations. A similar but a greater period was that "fulness of the times when God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." At such a season as this, it is manifest that more will be revealed, than can be at once apprehended, and appropriated: and since divine truth is only disclosed in order that it may be understood, it is equally manifest that long periods must subsequently elapse, in which it will be necessary for the Church to have the familiar truth presented under new aspects, that so, in the gradual progress of spiritual intelligence, it may be wrought into the habits and feelings of the people, and thus at length prepare a fitting basis for new and higher revelations. Such an epoch was that which followed the settlement in Canaan, and accordingly we find that the prophets of that period, were more properly inspired teachers of the meaning of the old, than inspired predictors of the nature of a new development of truth. Much more than the priests, they were the representatives,

under the Old Dispensation, of Christian ministers under the New. Like them they held meetings for devotional exercises and spiritual instruction, labouring to confirm the godly, and arouse the careless, and to spread everywhere, that spiritual revival, for which our natural earthliness too surely creates the need. It was necessary to say so much about the more general functions of the prophet, both to prevent mistake, and to furnish a basis, of sufficient breadth and stability, to sustain certain valuable conclusions in respect to the form and intention of predictive prophecy. But it is now especially this latter to which I desire to call your attention. In future, under the name of prophecy, I shall for the most part confine myself to that narrower view of it, in which it is regarded rather as predictive of the future, than as perceptive and declarative of the present and past. In this point of view, prophecy may be defined as the represented future of the kingdom of God, which while it is grounded on an objective communication from heaven, is, through the illumination of the Spirit, internally perceived and announced by man; and which while it finds itself for the most part on the past, taking thence the germs and drapery of its representations, yet points out, with more or less distinctness of detail, the substantial future of the Divine economy. With this definition of prophecy—if in all prophecy, whe-

ther predictive or not, there be a divine, and divinely-enabled human element—the objective revelation, and the subjective human apprehension of it—it is clear that in predictions, where human foresight, and even ordinarily enlightened spiritual foresight, must be inadequate or useless, the objective element of prophecy—divine revelation—must largely preponderate. In order to exhibit clearly the relation of this kind of revelation to the inspiration of the prophet, it will be necessary to examine shortly, the important distinction between revelation and inspiration. Lee states it thus: "By revelation I understand a direct communication from God to man....By inspiration, on the other hand, I understand that actuating energy of the Holy Spirit, in whatever degree or manner it may have been exercised, by which human agents, chosen by God, have officially proclaimed His will by word of mouth or have committed to writing the several portions of the Bible." Here you will perceive that Inspiration is made equal to the divinely-imparted power of communicating what has been revealed. Mr Morell, however, makes the distinction to consist in something different from this. "Revelation," he remarks, "implies two conditions; it implies, viz. an intelligible object presented, and a given power of recipiency in the subject; and in popular language....we confine the term Revelation to the former of these

conditions, and appropriate the term inspiration to designate the latter. Thus, revelation....indicates that act of divine power by which God presents the truth to the human mind, while inspiration denotes that special influence wrought upon the faculties of the subject, by which he is able to grasp those realities in their perfect fulness and integrity." Here, as you will perceive, inspiration is made equal to the divinely-imparted power of receiving what has been revealed. I believe that both these views err by defect, and that instead of opposing they should supplement each other. When the realities of the spiritual world are displayed in vision to the seer, he must needs perceive, before he can communicate the vision. And since such perception is impossible without the extraordinary assistance of the Spirit, it is plainly erroneous, with Lee, to confine the operation of inspiration to the declaration of truth. But on the other hand, since prophetic activity does not cease with the perception, but must from its very nature and name proceed to the declaration of truth, it is clearly as erroneous, with Morell, to confine the operation of inspiration to the perception of spiritual realities. There is certainly a difference between inspiration and revelation, but, as it seems to me, it is not of the nature indicated by either of the writers mentioned. Far better is the distinction, pointed out by Auberlen, between revelation and prophecy.

“*Αποκάλυψις*,” says he, “indicates a divine, *προφητία*, a human activity.” And again he says of the two expressions, “they are used as two distinct species of the same genus, according as the objective revelation, or the subjective prophetic inspiration, is more prominent. Thus St Paul distinguishes them in 1 Cor. xiv. either by revelation or by prophesying.” In this comparison, the purely divine element in the contents of prophecy, is first distinctly separated from that which is partly divine and partly human; and we thus see that the operation of inspiration must be sought in prophesying only. Here, however, it is to be looked for, both in the prophet’s perception and announcement of the truth; so that there must be a gift and state of inspiration, corresponding on the one hand to God’s revelation, and on the other, to man’s declaration of the truth. When truth is revealed, whether that truth have reference to the meaning of the present, or the character of the future, there must be a divine inbreathing by which man is enabled to see what God presents to him; and when, as a consequence of this, truth is declared by the prophet, there must still be a divine inbreathing to enable him to state adequately what he has seen. It is of the last consequence, to the proper understanding of the Divine inspiration of the prophets, that we should have clear ideas on this point. For if we confine the gift of inspiration to the per-

ception of the truth, with Morell, we not only restrain the operation of the illuminating Spirit in an arbitrary and unauthorized manner, but also leave open a wide door of doubtfulness as to the inspiration of the Scriptures, which, when the word prophecy is understood in its widest sense, may be described as a written declaration of what the prophets perceived. Again, if with Lee, on the other hand, we admit the influence of inspiration only in the announcement of the word, thus, by implication, denying that the utterance of truth took place under the same living impulse as the seeing of it, we shall be in danger of attributing a magical importance to the letter, as distinct from the spirit in which it was first conceived. It was the suspicion of this danger which made Lange declare, that the "supposed abstraction, whereby the inspiration of the writing was separated from the inspiration of the life," had in it "somewhat Talmudistic." The looseness of this statement no doubt lays it open to Stier's retort, "Who is for making this separation?" But if it had run thus—the word "vision" being substituted for "life"—"The supposed abstraction, whereby the inspiration of the writings is separated from the inspiration of the *vision*, has in it somewhat Talmudistic,"—it would have been equally valuable and incontrovertible. The theory which is here criticized, separating, as it does, the writing from the vision of truth,

makes the same degree of divine illumination necessary, for the record of the plainest and obscurest facts; of the simplest outward occurrence, and the sublimest spiritual communication. But if, on the other hand, we recognize a necessary internal connection, between the prophetic perception and declaration of divine truth, we shall be obliged to recognize also the necessity for a higher degree of supernatural assistance, corresponding to the elevation or obscurity of the matter revealed. For this necessity is at once apparent in connection with the perception of heavenly truth. The simplest consideration of the divine economy will convince us, that in employing a human organ of communication, God would, so to speak, use up everything in the knowledge, and spiritual faculty of his agent, which would contribute towards the desired end. That knowledge, and this faculty, are not in themselves sufficient to the end, or there would be no need of inspiration; and, speaking of the writings of such agents, St Paul could not say that they were given by inspiration of God, nor St Peter, that "prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But still, as Stier beautifully says, "Because the word of the Spirit was a word coming through the mouth of men, and the thoughts of men, therefore was the knowledge of these holy men

themselves (he is speaking here of a knowledge spiritually imparted) the medium of utterance employed by the Spirit....The prophet says many things which he himself does not altogether understand, but nothing in regard to which he has no thought at all....And thus...the prophetic writings are truly organic wholes, and living products of minds affected by the surrounding external and internal relations." Since then we must conceive that whatever real knowledge or spiritual faculty the prophet possessed, would be used in imparting to him a divine revelation, yea, since the tokens of different styles and idiosyncracies in the sacred writings, prove that they were so used, we must allow, that in proportion as the matter of the divine revelation presented to the prophet, was further removed from the sphere of his ordinary knowledge, or from the reach of his unassisted powers, it would be necessary to furnish him with higher degrees of Divine illumination, in order to enable him to perceive it. We must all have felt this in reading either the obscurer or loftier portions of the prophetic writings. But perhaps the most striking illustration of its truth, is to be found in those prophecies, distinctively of the future, which in consequence of the great preponderance in them of the element of Revelation—the element solely divine—have been called Apocalyptic; I mean of course the revelations

of Daniel and St John. In these, the prophet is not so much speaking of the things around him, or for the men of his own generation, as of the things of the future, and for all the generations to come. In other words, the objective element of revelation is at its highest, and the question hence arises, whether as a matter of fact, we find the subjective element of inspiration imparted in a corresponding degree. We do; for we read of St John, that while an exile for the word of God in the lonely isle of Patmos, he became "in Spirit" on the Lord's day. There is only one in whom the fulness of the Spirit always abode, and just as there is no priest in the Christian Church because all are priests, and there is no temple in heaven because it is all temple, so it could never be said of Christ that He became in Spirit, because He always was in spirit. But even apostles had varying degrees of illuminating grace. St John had the ordinary and saving grace of a believer, and the extraordinary and enlightening grace of an apostle, but yet to neither of these does he make reference in the words I have quoted. As Auberlen remarks, "While the prophet speaks in the spirit, the apocalyptic seer is in the spirit." We may say that he was withdrawn from the forms of which the senses take account, and that then, dead to things of time, his spiritual ear was opened to recognize the language of another world; that as he sank deeper

and deeper into the forgetfulness of earth, his soul opened more and more widely—grew more and more acutely sensitive to the glories which are within the veil. He was “snatched away to paradise;” he saw things as angels see them, in their spiritual meanings and connections, not thinking or feeling, but rather hearing and seeing, as the mystic symbols were uttered and displayed before him.

Such a case as this shews, I think, conclusively that different degrees of divine illumination are to be looked for in the prophet, in proportion as the matter of what is revealed to him, may be further removed from the sphere of his ordinary knowledge, or from the reach of his unassisted powers. If, then, it be asked what is meant in general by the inspiration of a prophet—if the question be, not what we *may* hold on this subject in particular cases, but what we *must* hold in all cases, I suppose we should be justified in answering, that all which is necessarily implied in the idea of prophetic inspiration, is this,—that the Spirit of God, which ever abides in the Church, shall supernaturally enable some individual or individuals of a particular age, to rise so far above the highest level of its existing spiritual discernment, as to lead the Church to a fuller perception, both of its existing privileges and obligations, and of its future hopes and duties. What should be the extent of the revelation vouchsafed to any age of

the Church, and therefore, what should be the degree of the inspiration of those through whom that revelation was to be imparted, only He could determine who knows the Church's wants and resources; and therefore to Him it must be left to decide, whether the Church shall be taught by a Joseph or a Moses, a Deborah or a David.

Turning now from the investigation of the proper functions and endowments of the prophet to the consideration of the contents of his prophecy, I think we should naturally conclude in the first place, that the future would most probably be represented under the forms of the present. And that, not only or chiefly because of the fact, already established, that the prophet's spiritual knowledge and capacity would be utilized in his predictions, but much more from a consideration of the genesis of the future, as this is indicated either in the history of the world or of Israel. We know as a matter of fact that the future does spring out of the past and present; that the complex multitude of forces, political, social and religious, which fashion the life of the present, have been originated and determined by the past, and will, in their turn, originate and determine the future. If then we knew the history of those forces, viz. how they came to be what they are, and the present nature of those forces, viz. exactly what they are, we should plainly have gone a great way towards perceiving what they

would hereafter become, what would be their course and fashion in the future. And since this is a connexion between the present and the future which is natural and necessary, we should expect that any revelation from God, would mark that connection, by depicting the future as what it is—the child and offspring of the present. And if we should expect this in reference to the history of the world, how much more in connexion with that of the Church? All history is to some extent prophetic, but that of the early Church was specially designed to be so. Prophecy gave birth to the history, for the development of salvation began in the promise of the divine seed of the woman. But if prophecy gave birth to the history, this in turn continually fulfilled the prophecy, and furnished ever renewed starting-points for its predictions. Thus the history and prophecy of the Church are inextricably interwoven, history being the basis if not the measure of prophecy; while this on the other hand descends from its lofty sphere to breathe its spirit into the history, taking it for a dress in which to exhibit the real present,—for a glass in which to mirror the spiritual future. The Jewish history is the development of a great plan, which stretches onward from the fall of man to the consummation of all things in glory. The earlier part was intended to be typical of the later; and thus, if the Prophet of the future had no means of

representing it but through the figures of the present, he knew at least that those figures had been fashioned by the operation of divine grace, and were intended to have their counterparts and fulfilments in the time to come. Do we not feel even now that not only the tabernacle and its sacrifices, but the very events and circumstances of Jewish history, are so many shadows of our inner life? The escape from bondage—the crossing of the sea—the walking in the wilderness with God—the manna, and the rock, and the guiding pillar by the way—the rebellion and punishment, the obedience and blessing, the rest by the Jordan, and the crossing into the promised land—are not all these deeply representative of the stages and incidents of our spiritual journey? And if we feel it to be no anachronism to talk even now about going to Canaan, why should we think it to be so, when the Jewish prophets represented the future of the kingdom of Christ, under the forms of the Jewish history, or the figures of the Temple and its service? It was surely natural, that the world-power which opposed itself to God, should be represented to Isaiah by that vast and terrible shape, which already, in his days, impended over the northern frontier, and cast its dark shadow across the hills of Israel. And hence, when he caught in prophetic vision, a glimpse of another great power in the future, which should hold the same or a similar

attitude towards the Church, it was equally natural that he should delineate the same spiritual thing under the form which in his own time represented it; calling the future opponent of the Church by the name of its existing antagonist—Assyria.

And this is all the more certain, when we remember what were those elements and characteristics of contemporary events and persons, which formed the special objects of the prophets' contemplation.

To them, Israel was not great because of the victories of David, or the magnificence of Solomon, not because of the strength of its hills or the richness of its valleys, but because it was the land where Jehovah manifested His presence and power; because it was the chosen theatre of His glory, the appointed home of His covenant-people. It was to the spiritual influence of the past, the spiritual meaning and issues of the present, that the prophets directed their attention; and thus, that to them was Israel which had Israel's spiritual characteristics; that to them was Babylon or Assyria which embodied the effective spiritual influence of these nations. When we once see that the thing contemplated by the prophet is the spiritual fact underlying the appearance, we shall easily understand how a prediction not only may, but must, have a nearer and remoter, or rather continually renewing fulfilment. For spiritual principles continue identical, good is always opposed to evil,

the Church to the world, Christ to Antichrist; and therefore, however various may be the forms under which the inevitable conflict is waged, its nature and its issue must be ever substantially the same. And this consideration may show us why the most positive predictions are sometimes formally falsified. The prediction always has respect to the spiritual condition of those addressed, and, since this may sometimes change, God's course of action must be adapted to the new spiritual conditions. Phenomenal consistency would evidently in such circumstances be equivalent to substantial contradiction. A prophecy addressed to free creatures plainly presupposes the possibility of such a change, and its positive promises and threatenings must always be understood, as subject to the essential spiritual conditions which God contemplated in uttering them. When men change in their moral character, then, unless there be no distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness, God must change his conduct towards them. Since Jonah's threatening against Nineveh was uttered against that city, neither considered as a collection of bricks and bitumen, nor as an assemblage of people belonging to a particular race, but only against a community contemplated as existing in a particular spiritual condition, God would have broken His word, and contradicted His nature, if He had destroyed that community when its spiritual condi-

tion had changed. The form in this case must bend to the substance, the letter to the spirit, because it was always the spirit which was contemplated in the form.

But while insisting on the great importance of the fundamental connexion between history and prophecy, we must also admit, that there is something much more specific in many parts of the prophetic writings than has already been noticed—references not only to principles but to persons, not only to spiritual powers, but also to natural facts which were the specific developments of those powers.

But does this admission seriously affect the conclusions at which we have already arrived? Shall we have to assume a totally different character for those prophecies which are commonly called Messianic, or can we connect them fundamentally with those already noticed? I think we can. For we are able to show that there are some events of so purely spiritual a nature, that the existence and increase of spiritual life itself, depend on their occurrence. The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost was manifestly such an event. Is there any other like it, or even richer than it, in spiritual fruit and significance? You know that there is one fact to which all others in the history of the Church are subordinate. If we are only Deists we shall not

acknowledge this, but if we are Christians, yea, if we only believe that the New Testament contains a trustworthy record of facts, we must admit that no prophet could have prophesied, and no Church have been established, without the Incarnation of the Son of God.

A history of salvation only becomes possible through this fact. To its realization all history before it tended, to the development of its results, all history since it has been contributing. Think how eminent is its place among the great facts of revelation. That event to which the Church looks onward with longing eyes—the coming of her Bridegroom in the glory of His Father—is only, after all, a plainer manifestation of that which already exists, viz. the glorified humanity of the Son of God. But the Incarnation was the constitution of a new thing, of a thing so stupendous that our minds reel at its contemplation; it was no less than the coming into bounds of the Infinite, the bowing to death of the Self-existent. If this were ever done, here is the point of importance, not only in all human but in all finite history; in the experience of angels as well as of men. Here must be found that which gives its character and conditions to all our spiritual life, that which is its source and continuous supply, that for the attainment of which all history was really preparing, for the development and fuller manifestation

of which all history is now progressing. And if this be so, if Abraham were called and Israel chosen, if David were taken from the sheep-fold to sit upon the throne, if kings governed, priests sacrificed, prophets spake, and people joyed and sorrowed only for this great end, is it not impossible to believe that, when unrolling the Church's future in the mystic vision of prophecy, the Spirit should never have pointed on to that fact which should be at once the source of all blessing and the centre of all glory? If the prophecies be not Messianic, the New Testament shows them to be nothing, for in teaching us that God has become man, and that all the past of Israel prefigured and prepared for the Incarnation, it shows conclusively that there was no foresight of the spiritual future, if there were none of Him who was its substance and its crown. If we be convinced of this, then, instead of evading Messianic inferences in Psalmist and prophet, we shall rather seek them, and welcome them, as proofs that the Spirit of Jesus is speaking in the ancient records, as proofs that the Church of the Covenant is one, participating in one life, animated by one spirit, growing into one body through all the ages and dispensations, from the darkness of a Paradise lost to the glory of a Paradise regained.

Thus far it has appeared then that the end and contents of prophecy are primarily of a spiritual

character, and that, even when they have reference to facts and persons. Before however we are entitled to consider this conclusion as universally established, another series of prophetic phenomena remain to be examined. There are some prophecies which, while referring to particular persons or events, are yet not Messianic. Such are the prophecies of Isaiah respecting Cyrus, and of Agabus respecting the famine in the days of Claudius, and generally large portions of the apocalyptic prophecies of Daniel and St John. It may be doubted indeed how far this is true of the Apocalypse of St John, but, granting all that is asked, does not this statement of the difficulty suggest its solution? The prediction of particular events, evidently occupies in the sphere of prophecy, the same place which we assign to miracles in the sphere of spiritual activity;—they are of infrequent occurrence, and (neglecting in each case special instances) they occur in great cycles, at those crises when they are imperatively called for by the spiritual exigencies of the Church. If miracles were wrought continually, we could no more say that the Church's power was pre-eminently spiritual, than we could make the same assertion of her prophetic revelations, if the prediction of outward events were commonly found in the Holy Scriptures. But just as the two great circles of miraculous activity are coincident respectively with the giving of the law and

the proclamation of the Gospel, so do the two great cycles of apocalyptic prophecy occur just at those seasons when there was the greatest spiritual need for them, viz. in the despair of the captivity, and in the darkening shadows of that long night of waiting, through which the Church should keep her lonely watch for the sun-rise of her Bridegroom's glory.

I have said that these two periods, (viz. 1st, that which elapsed between the Babylonian captivity and our Lord's first coming, and, 2ndly, that which was to intervene between the Ascension of Christ and His return in glory), were those which stood in greatest need of particular guidance. For though they were by no means the intervals of least light and faithfulness in their respective dispensations, yet were they the periods which should have no fresh objective revelation springing up within their own limits.

And hence it was manifestly of the last importance that, when the faithful of those periods looked back to the light of the past for direction, they should find themselves not only furnished with that general knowledge of the Divine purposes, which is common to all ages of the Church's history, but, further, with such a clue to the solution of their own peculiar perplexities, as should in some measure correspond to that furnished to the prophetic ages by the specific utterances of their seers. Now not only do the prophecies of Daniel and St John correspond

in general to this spiritual want, but, more particularly, they meet it in that way, and to that degree, which their differing dispensations require. Just as the miracles of Moses were especially national in their object and manner of appeal, so were the predictions of Daniel more particular and political in their form and application. And, on the other hand, since the revelation of St John had to cover such long intervals, and to represent the contact and conflict of such complicated and wide-spread principles; since it had to represent the life of a Church, which, by its Master's command, was to engage at all points the opposing world-powers wielded by the agents of evil; and since, moreover, it had to represent the fortunes of these conflicts through all the ages till the end—we find that it has given at once, both a general view of the whole, and such detailed description of the parts, as may to some extent supply to all the Christian ages the want of direct and contemporary prophecy. Stepping from height to height of human history, illuminating its mountain-tops while it leaves its valleys in shadow, the last revelation of Jesus Christ has yet so clearly discovered the peculiar features of each point which it illumines, that the spiritually wise of every succeeding generation cannot fail to recognize them.

Even here then, in the region where perhaps we should least expect to discover it, we find the same

remarkable subordination of the external to the spiritual which we noticed before; and we must thus, I think, conclude, that prophecy, whether generally delineating the spiritual future, or more particularly describing the person and glories of the Messiah, or more particularly still uttering those special predictions which are required by particular exigencies of the Church—that prophecy, in all these aspects of it, has especial reference to the spiritual future of the kingdom of Christ. It pourtrays in general no artificial distinctions of time or place or communion, but the one real distinction between the spiritual and unspiritual, between good and evil, between Christ and Belial, between the Beast and the Lamb. Hopelessly mysterious and incomprehensible in relation to what is merely curious and useless, it traces so plainly the course and issue of the great battle between good and evil, that mistake is as impossible as despair. Preparing us for the temporary triumph of evil, it assures us of the ultimate victory of good, and enables us, even while shuddering at the might and malice of the enemy, to see the Lamb standing on Mount Sion, to hear the songs of heavenly rejoicing, and to discern through the murky clouds of the last great conflict the dawning of eternal day.

Thus prophecy is the golden link which binds together all the purposes of God. Its great object is redemption, and its most joyous bursts of inspiration

are the bridal songs which tell of the coming of the Bridegroom to redeem and glorify His Church. In form it may be obscure, because it is the shaping of the spiritual and incomprehensible by means of the visible and earthly; but, because it was seen in spirit, its heart of love is felt plainly throbbing beneath this inadequate earthly exterior, like an invisible pulsation of heaven.

And thus its freshness, its spirituality, its heavenliness, make it peculiarly precious in these days of barren materialism. For it lifts the veil between earth and heaven, it transports us to the sphere of the seraphim; yea, it brings us into the presence of the Lamb, as it had been slain, casting across the darkness and confusion of our history, the light of that glorious consummation which shall crown and explain it all. We hear the trumpet-voices of angels, and the loud-resounding praises which are rising and commingling from ten thousand times ten thousand of the redeemed; yea, we tremble at that greater Voice, which rolls around us in deep and multitudinous inflexions like the sound of many waters, or comes pealing over earth and heaven like thunder from the everlasting throne. Bending over its sacred pages we do not feel earthly life supernatural, but heavenly life natural; we do not feel common things ghostly, but spiritual things familiar; we do not feel earth airy and unsubstantial, but heaven real and

nigh. The earth is not lost, but transfigured. Its air is filled with invisible spirits, its plains become the battle-fields of heaven and hell, its ways are filled with pilgrims pressing forward to the heavenly city, or crowded with blaspheming multitudes who are hastening downwards to the pit. It is as though some mighty angel had torn away the thick covering of human deception, and made us look at things as they nakedly are, as we all one day must look at them when the Redeemer comes to judgment. My brethren, if you would make the vision of these things a joy and not a terror, pray to Him who is the Light and Salvation of men, that in His Light you may see Light. Pray that you may be vitally one with Christ, and then, in the communion of His Spirit, you shall see both His Word and His world full of Him. You shall see Him manifested in every glowing vision, in every array of judgment or of glory, as it passes in solemn and stately grandeur across the sacred page; you shall see Him in every mysterious Providence to which the book of prophecy refers—in the State and the Church, the home and the market-place, everywhere working, everywhere overruling all outward and inward things to the furtherance of His eternal purpose, to the establishment of His promised kingdom—when good shall finally triumph over evil, Christ over Anti-Christ, and God over the great enemy of men.

SERMON III.

GENESIS XIII. 14.

And the Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward; for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.

THERE is a great belt of desert, larger than the whole of Europe, which extends from the Atlantic sea-board of Africa, to the Persian Gulph and the mountains of Kurdistan. This vast expanse of torrid and tawny sands is almost unbroken by a trace of verdure, save in the two oases of the Nile and Euphrates, and upon that island of greenness which is lifted out of the boundless wastes of the desert-sea, by the hills of Palestine. It is interesting to remember, that these three gardens of the world's great wilderness were the earliest seats of civilization and empire; and that the races which inhabited

them, were connected quite as remarkably by the mutual influence of their spiritual and national development, as the countries were by their singular geographical relations. In the midst was Israel, on its mountain fortress by the sea, with the tables of a juster law and the temple of a purer worship, keeping the passes between the two great rival empires of the plain.

On one side lay Egypt, the earliest home of magic and mystery, the land of the sphinx and the pyramid, whose huge temples and gigantic idealism still surprise us with a sense of the vast and incomprehensible. On the other lay Assyria, with its endless plains of corn-fields and gardens, veined over with a silver network of life-bearing streamlets, its towers of terraced brickwork lifting their painted cliffs above a hundred splendid cities, and pouring the light of their gleaming silvern summits over a hundred sunny plains.

Egypt and Assyria are the two great names of early civilization, each mighty through the richness of its soil and the numbers of its people, each proud of the thousands of its chariots and the myriads of its horsemen, each nourished by its magnificent river, and each piling on its level plains those huge and mysterious buildings whose very ruins are mountains.

And yet, however externally alike, the merest

glance at their remains reveals a most important spiritual difference—that the Assyrian power was not a mere repetition of the Egyptian, but at once a variation and an advance.

Any one who has looked thoughtfully at the invaluable reproduction of the most characteristic of those remains at Sydenham, will at once understand what I mean. In the Egyptian architecture we see the reflection of the calmness and vastness of the blind powers of nature—of those stern, crushing, calm-moving forces, which, from the days of stormy chaos, have been fashioning this earth, through all the geologic times, by flood and earthquake, by slow wearing of the mountains, and slow building in the seas, to be the green and beautiful dwelling-place of man. In the Assyrian, on the other hand, there appears as plainly the adoration of the powers of life. Here the statues have lost their smoothness of outline, their forced conventionality, the indefiniteness and vastness of their power; the muscles are huge, knotted, deeply-marked, obviously exaggerated, as by an artist who had caught the idea of vital as opposed to that of merely physical power, and who wished to impart the sense, not only of might but of life, not only of weight but of activity. The Assyrian is the representative in history of that vital animal-power which, though of higher, is of later terrestrial development; which,

beginning in the wild waters of Silurian seas, has risen higher and higher, through zoophyte and fish, and reptile and mammal, to its culmination in the lower nature of man. And this difference between the two empires is not only marked in the remains of their art, but also, as far as we know it, in the tone of their history. The one calm, crushing, mysterious, weighing upon the imagination like that grey, massive, indefinite Russian column, of which Mr Kinglake speaks; the other strong and active at once, like the winged bulls of their monuments, or like that wondrous English line which swept so proudly up the steeps of Alma, the very impersonation of massive strength wielded by intensest activity.

Such were the two great empires which confronted each other from opposite sides of the Syrian desert, whose gigantic shadows met on the hills of Palestine. And it was just upon that narrow ridge of hills which, stretching from Lebanon to the river of Egypt, formed, so to speak, the natural bridge over the desert-sea, that God planted his people Israel.

These were the embodiment of yet another power, not of the physical or the vital, but of the spiritual; of that which demands an affinity for the infinite, a sense of immortality, a yearning for communion with God; in short, a faculty divine which is

found only in man, and only in him, as the highest development of his nature.

Remember that these three great peoples of the ancient world, thus strikingly representing matter and life and spirit, were providentially placed so that they must necessarily in some degree act and react on each other's development, and, if I am not mistaken, it will throw quite a peculiar light over the divine purpose in their history. It is difficult in contemplating so fruitful a subject, to avoid being visionary and fanciful. Egypt, the power which catches the impress of external nature, which feels the pressure of material might, and insensibly fashions itself more or less into the likeness of what it feels, rises to eminence first; and like the elementary power which it adumbrates, outlasts the higher and more transient form of vital force which impresses itself on Assyria. And, again, the Jew, dwelling in the border-land, receiving the influence of both, tempted to worship nature, tempted to worship the meaner self, and yet through all unfaithfulness and lapse fashioned by the higher life of God, outlasts them both, a living parable of the Spirit's immortality, which can survive, even in exile and ruin, when all physical and vital forms shall be no more.

Again, the human soul is a mirror which catches and reflects the character of all things without it—a

microcosm wherein is seen the picture and reproduction of the vast sum of external being. But according to the angle at which the mirror of humanity is turned towards the world of matter, or life, or spirit, it will give a more or less perfect image of any of them. In Egypt it is turned towards inorganic, in Assyria towards organic nature; while in Palestine alone it catches the full light of heaven. Those Syrian hills are the Spirit's throne, where lifted above the deserts of earth, it sits nearest to heaven, while spread beneath it on either hand—resting on the desert's level as their home—are nature's twin provinces of matter and life—rich and green with the beauty and greatness of time—always imposing and often victorious in the region of sense, but doomed like all things visible and temporal to fall before the power which shall yet clothe itself with their glory, and which is itself unseen and eternal.

He must be remarkably devoid of curiosity who would not ask himself, while contemplating such remarkable analogies, how these three great peoples of antiquity came to be thus connected? Was there a design in their peculiar geographical relations? Did He, "who made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of all the earth...determine the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation, that they should seek after the Lord, if

haply they might feel after Him and find Him"? Did He, "who is not far from every one of us," bring the Jew out of bondage, and place him on that narrow bridge of the desert, that he might be a light to lighten the Gentiles who dwelt in the dark places on either hand? Was it design or accident which determined the place of the chosen people? Did their character and office determine *it*, or did its nature and position determine *them*? Our text tells us that the place was determined with reference to the divinely-appointed office of the people, that at least four hundred years before the Exodus, God had intimated, to the father of the race, that the hills of Judah were already selected as the future home of the holy nation. Let us ask, then, what indications there are in the nature of the country, that it was adapted to the office thus divinely assigned to it?

Moses was taken to the top of Pisgah, on the table-lands of Moab, that he might see the character of the land towards which he had been leading his people, that he might see how admirably it was adapted to its spiritual purpose, and that seeing this, he might bless God before he died. What, let us ask, was the character of the scene which was spread out before him, and which to the prophetic vision was imaged, as in a suggestive frame-work, by that portion of the land on which his eyes rested?

He saw a country "from almost every high point

of which, its whole breadth is visible, from the long wall of the Moab hills on the east, to the Mediterranean sea on the west," every view of which is therefore relieved and beautified by constant glimpses of these magnificent boundaries, on one side of the purple shade of the towering mountains, on the other of the far-gleaming of the Western sea.

Beneath him was the Jordan, "like a gigantic green serpent threading its tortuous way through its tropical jungle," and rushing downwards, almost uselessly, between hoary precipitous walls of limestone, to its dark mysterious grave. Beyond, were the hills of Galilee, overhanging the lake of Gennesareth, and that deep depression which formed the rich plain of Esdraelon; while before him were those bleak rolling hills of Ephraim and Judah, which, stretching across the whole country, sank down precipitously at the very feet of the prophet into the opposite gorge of the Jordan. This is what he saw. It was not a fair and smiling, but rather a stern and gloomy prospect—only interesting and inviting by contrast with the desert. By contrast with the desert,—but not with the place where he stood, for he stood above the plains of Moab, on the summit of Pisgah, looking backward and upward on the rich pastures of Gilead, and the waving forests of Bashan, on a country which, travellers tell us, "as far surpasses Western Palestine as Devonshire surpasses Cornwall." It is not

the exchange from a desert to a paradise which the prophet sees, but one from plenty to scarceness, from richness to ruggedness. But if the prospect were so different from that which is generally imagined, why is the sight of it conceded as a last and crowning favour to the prophet's anxious desire? Would not the reality disappoint him?—would he think this knot of barren mountains the sufficient reward of all his people's toils, the fitting goal of all their wanderings? That would depend upon what he desired and expected to find; most disappointing if he hoped to gain for his people a carnal paradise—but not necessarily so—if he had in view their spiritual safety and development. We must judge of a country by the needs of its people. The low barren islets of the Venetian lagoons seemed hardly fit for fishing-huts to common eyes; but to the sufferers fleeing from their burning homes in fertile Italy, they would appear an earthly paradise, for they promised refuge to the fugitive, and freedom to the slave; they promised that which the Arab sought in the desert, and the Cymri in the mountains—the blessings of freedom, and the sanctities of home. And can we suppose that the great prophet sought something for his people less worthy and less spiritual than this, when he led them forth from the midst of a mighty and idolatrous nation? He did not seek rich and fertile plains, for he would find none greener than those of Goshen; but a place

where the tribes of Israel might erect and defend the sanctuary of Jehovah; a place where, under the protection of God, they might grow to be great and pious and free. But how difficult to find such a place ; for think of the intricacy of the problem to be solved. Given—a people which is to influence all the world, and yet to be kept pure within and safe without—to find a position in which to plant it. To be kept pure within they must be kept alike from the temptations to luxury and slavery, the two great causes of oriental decay. To be kept safe without, they must grow great and strong, either by wealth and numbers, or by the vigour of a free and pious people, whose strength and courage were supplemented by natural walls and bulwarks. Should they wander in the desert ? The desert made man free, but left him wild and shifting as its sands. Should they spread their tents on the great river-plains of Egypt or Assyria ? These made indeed strong and wealthy states, but they destroyed the piety of the individual. Should they then seek the shelter of inaccessible mountains ? But how then could they perform the great end of their calling, to be God's witnesses to the world ? There was but one place where all the necessary conditions seemed to be fulfilled, viz. in that fortress of the mountains which was set in the midst of the world's highway, on the desert-bridge between the homes of its

mightiest peoples, across which all the world's pilgrims and traders must pass, but where a brave and pious people might hold their own against the most powerful. Moses rejoiced in the view from Pisgah, because he saw thence the solution of this wondrous problem—saw it in those fortress-rocks of Ephraim and Judah, guarded on every side by the sea and the desert, the river and the mountains.

A comparison like this between the spiritual end contemplated in Israel's calling, and the physical characteristics of the country which was selected as its home, cannot fail to convince us of the striking adaptation of the place to the people; and thus it becomes evident, either that the people were produced by the place, or that the place, as our text assures us, was divinely selected for the people. Mr Buckle would tell us that the land formed the nation, and that the discovery of all these adaptations is but the sign of it; that, in short, they are what on his theory we should expect to find, in examining the history of so remarkable a people.

I do not wish to disguise the fact that it is very difficult, by the light of reason alone, to solve so intricate a problem as that which I have just suggested.

Errors may generally be described as of two kinds, viz. those which contradict the truth, and those which only fall short of it. Of these, errors which are of the first kind, are by far the more easy to expose

and remove, since they may generally be shown to contradict some axiom of thought, or authoritative oracle of conscience. But errors of the latter kind it is very difficult indeed to exhibit in their true character; for they assume what to a great extent we admit, and are often so far true, that it almost seems arbitrary and unreasonable to admit so much, and then not admit all. We allow, for instance, in the case under consideration, that the land of Israel had a most important influence in calling forth, preserving, and developing the life of the chosen people, and moreover that that influence was exerted according to a fixed and determinate law. We admit all this, but we deny that the physical peculiarities of Palestine were *alone* sufficient, to cause the race which inhabited it, to differ so remarkably as it did from all other peoples of mankind.

The nature of the question in controversy is sometimes misapprehended, and therefore it may be well perhaps to state it distinctly. There are some who, holding with Mr Buckle that the human race is originally the same everywhere, and can only be affected by visible and material influences, not only assert that the law of its growth is organic, but that the observation of the conditions of climate, soil, situation, and the like, will furnish a sufficient basis for the discovery of that law. Others again, holding the same fundamental theory, viz. that since the

organic power of the human plant is originally the same in all cases, it will grow in a particular direction, or with a special degree of strength according to its material conditions,—yet deny that the observation of those conditions alone, will suffice to determine the law of growth. There is a law, these would say, but we cannot discover its formula—there is a fixed orbit of historic revolution, but we cannot determine its curve. The organic unit of humanity is too complex, it involves spontaneous forces of too mighty and mysterious a nature. Mr Froude lately quoted a very striking expression of Kant to this effect. “Two things amaze me,” said the Königsberg seer, “the infinite space thick sown with stars; and—the sense of right and wrong.” It requires little reflection to discern his meaning. He was astounded equally at the vast expanse of life, and at the enormous elevation of the highest form of its development; at the fecundity of the Creative Power as seen in the great whole, and at the richness of that power as displayed in the noblest part; at the endless multiplication of units, and the intricate complication of a single unit; at the infinity in the world of sense, and at that in the world of soul. The one seemed like the wide-spreading light-æther, which vibrates beyond the immeasurable bounds where telescopic vision becomes dim; the other is like that fabled fire-column, under the form of which Sceva revealed

his divinity to the contending gods ; and of which Southey tells us :—

Downward its depth to sound,
Veeshnoo a thousand years explor'd
The fathomless profound,
And yet no base he found :
Upward to reach its head
Ten myriad years the aspiring Bramah soar'd,
And still as up he fled
Above him still—the Immeasurable spread.

Whatever a man's theory of the origin of the moral nature may be, if he will acknowledge that it is incomprehensible, not to be measured by the petty line of sense and time, we can accord to him at least the merit of modesty and thoughtfulness ; but yet to a believer in revelation there must ever appear a fatal and fundamental defect, in any system which does not place the seat of the moral power in an immortal spirit, or which holds that it can be properly developed without the efficient operation of the Spirit of God. Besides, holding that the moral nature is stimulated and assisted by favouring worldly circumstances, we must confess, if we believe the Bible, that there is a Divine Spirit who made that nature like His own, spiritual ; who appointed all external circumstances to form the occasion of its activity ; and who perpetually directs the heart, and adapts its circumstances, as may be agreeable to His holy will. It seems, indeed, as if the discipline of Israel had been specially designed to show the possi-

bility of that Divine influence in history, which so many modern theorists deny. For what are its facts? those great facts, I mean, which every one must admit, or deny to the Israelites any history at all? Do the records of the nation show, that by any possibility the land of its possession could have originated its life? It had its origin, we are told, in the heart of a pilgrim from Assyria: it grew in the heart of another, who first left Palestine for the cradle of his race, and then, returning to the promised land for a little time, finally went down into Egypt to die. It was continued, we read, in this latter country among a nation of slaves, who were treated as aliens, and kept in the most cruel and debasing servitude; it was strengthened in a long, weary march through the barren wilderness of Sinai; and, finally, having been perfected in its verbal form, and established in its spiritual substance, it found its resting-place on the hills of the promised inheritance. But if the faith of the sons of Israel did not grow in Palestine, was it not indigenous in some other of the countries of their sojourning? We know that it was not. Abraham fled from the temptation to idolatry in Assyria; and Israel was brought out with a mighty arm from the dominion of the senseless idolatry of Egypt, to destroy the most licentious and abominable idolatry the world had ever known in Canaan. And the people's life was formed and nourished,

while continually moving out of the atmosphere of one of these indigenous idolatries into that of another, or while held down under one of the worst of them, in a painful and degrading bondage. If, then, the life of Israel grew up in the hearts of that people, not in consequence of, but in spite of, their external circumstances, whence shall we say that it came? Our physical historians will not hear of inherent superiorities of race, and much less of such superiorities as survive in spite of external circumstances, and thus we are driven to the admission, that the life of Israel neither grew up from the depths of its own nature, nor sprang forth from the ground, but that it came from God; that it was first breathed by Him as a living spark into the heart of one man, where it lived and burned, in spite of external and debasing influences; and whence (so strong was it) it passed as a lamp of light and flame into the hearts of his descendants, until, in God's own time, it was kindled as a beacon of life for all the world in the Pharos of Palestine.

If, thus, the ordinary facts of the Jewish history compel us to admit that the religious life of that people was given by God, and not produced by the action of external physical agencies, then those remarkable signs of adaptation in the land of promise which we have observed, will be recognized as so many tokens that the home of the covenant people

was selected by God. And, again, the fact that this particular country was set apart, in the Divine counsels, as the scene of the covenant history, will explain to us the reasonable ground for many of the supernatural facts of that history. For if a Divine life had been given to the Patriarchs, and God had designed that it should be developed and exhibited in a particular land, what could be more necessary, than that the pilgrims of salvation should be made acquainted with the goal, towards which their steps and desires should be directed? Admit once the Divine purpose in the choice of the land, and then the revelation of that purpose to Abraham becomes not only probable, but necessary; not only agreeable to the ordinary events of his life, but illustrative and explanatory of their meaning and purpose.

And, if I am not mistaken, the somewhat wider consideration of this subject will show, that so far from spiritual life being the product of certain fixed physical conditions, it is then most safe and most flourishing in this world, when to a great extent it is independent of such conditions; when, viz. it is enjoyed and cultivated in poverty and pilgrimage. For the whole history of the church of God, is nothing less nor more than the story of a pilgrimage. Even the most permanent and organized state of the early church was but a stage in her pilgrim journey to heaven, a land of Beulah, where she could

rest for a time, and gather strength, before entering on the more exhausting and more perilous trials of the way that had yet to be traversed. And it was only possible to abide there even for a time, because the wicked were excluded. Bunyan's instinct was undoubtedly right. There is no safe resting-place for the pilgrim by the way, except in those Delectable Mountains, where only the shepherds can get access to the sheep. This consideration suggests the reason why the earlier dispensation presents ever a character of only temporary completeness. Its condition approached "more nearly to that of heaven" than the outward condition of any subsequent age could do. Wickedness, it is true, was not absolutely shut out from its borders, for the chosen people had the leaven of iniquity among themselves; but Gentile wickedness was, triumphant wickedness was. Sin might exist in Israel, but so long as this continued the household of God, sin must at least be subordinate. And hence the little need in those early days for a doctrine of immortality; for many of the essential conditions of the future were already present in Israel. God was there; their King was in the midst of them; His presence was manifested, His word was spoken, His will was known, His power was exerted, His authority was outwardly acknowledged, and His majesty universally adored. It was an earthly foretaste of heaven, under the

sensible conditions of time ; and since the outward surroundings of a man are only accidents of his existence, it is of comparatively little consequence whether he is environed by the glory of heaven or the beauty of earth, so long as he consciously dwells with God. If, indeed, his soul be not holy, if sin be still within and around him, he will need, even on the Delectable Mountains, (and he will not fail to catch there) glimpses of that Celestial City, into which no sin can come ; but it will only be when he again staggers forward into the labours and dangers of active pilgrimage, that he will require to be continually reminded of the end of his journey, and the sweetness of his rest.

And what was the preaching of the Gospel, but the descent of the Church from the Delectable Mountains into a pilgrimage in the world ? She was thus coming back again in a certain sense to the condition of the pilgrim fathers, to wander in the earth from Assyria to Egypt, with no foot of land to call her own. She was descending into the babble and blasphemy of Vanity Fair, not to make the best of both worlds for herself, but to make the world better as she went through it, and to point it to that rest beyond the flood to which she herself was hastening. When we have once got a firm grasp of the Church's office and condition in these later ages, these times of the end, how natural those peculiar

phenomena of Christianity appear to us which have given so much offence to the world. If the Church be on pilgrimage, how necessary is it that she should be pointed more frequently and distinctly to the end of her journey; how necessary, that to nerve her for the glorious defeat of martyrdom, she should be continually reminded of the victory and coming of her Lord. Abraham kept aloof from the world, that he might be able to found a holy family which should become the household of God; but the Christian church, in this transcending alike the ideal of allegorists and the example of patriarchs, has gone on a pilgrimage that she may gain the world for her Lord; that she may carry all men with her on the way to the city of her rest. And since her portion of the Church's journey is thus the most perilous, so must her light and strength be the greatest. She must ever be looking, through the heavy clouds of battle and tribulation, for the light of the New Jerusalem; ever be seeking for strength in her deadly weakness, from her regnant and glorified King. Just because she is in the world she must not be of it; because her feet tread the burning sands of the wilderness, her gaze must ever be onward and upward to the beacon-light of heaven.

This is why it is so natural to us, why it was so habitual with the sacred writers, to represent the Christian's present life by the figures of the patri-

archal time, reserving those of the Church's more permanent condition, to express the joy and glory of his future home. We are *going* to the Zion of God, to the heavenly Jerusalem; but *now* we are strangers and pilgrims here, we seek a better country, that is an heavenly, a city which hath foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God. And this is just the state into which the patriarchs were called. The Lord said unto Abraham, "Get thee from thy country," not to be a king, or a prophet, or a priest, but to be a pilgrim, in a land where he might have "none inheritance therein, not so much as to set his foot on." It is this peculiarity in his life which gives to the record of it, that wonderful power of spiritual representation which we find there. It was not only inwardly like the Christian's spiritual life, but outwardly also. Its external incidents were a visible parable of its internal meaning—a living form into which the stream of the inner life naturally and consistently ran; a sacred language in which the pious souls of all ages have vividly and, so to speak, unconsciously expressed themselves. Sitting loose to the things of time, without home, or house, or land, the wandering patriarch was a living type of the earth-bound soul; in the world, but not of it; sojourning, but not abiding; dwelling thankfully in its tents for a space, but looking further, beyond the deserts, and beyond the years for its possession and its rest.

And do not the most earnest and real men feel even now, that, if they would cultivate the life of the Spirit, they must in like manner go on spiritual pilgrimage; that they must, as much as possible, sit loose to the world, even to be able to do it good? The monks might be wrong in fleeing from common life altogether, for it was their duty to seek God, not in the literal, but in the spiritual wilderness—to seek the heavenly gate, not in the solitude of a cell, but in the toil and conflict of the great highway of life. But after all, their instinct was at bottom a true one, that in such a world as they saw it would be madness to seek a home.

And if it be owned that they had too much solitude, it must surely be confessed that we have too little. The vast forms of material wealth and godless science throw their dark shadows across our path, even before we have emerged from the natural pilgrimage and seclusion of earth. Our children have no time for brooding and pondering over the mysteries of the world and of life; no time for that deep questioning which so often takes a young man down to the heart of things, and makes him dissatisfied with the shallow shows of the world. And thus we have become to a very great extent a generation of clever men, of men who know just the superficial facts of life, and are content to take all for granted which we see. We need more quiet, more reflection,

more of the blessed solitude of pilgrimage, that we may snatch back the fading vision of eternity, and hearken for that still small voice of our Heavenly Father, which we have lost in the tumults and distractions of the world. Sin is the veil which hides the glory of our Father's presence ; let us then seek some quiet scene where we may draw nearer to heaven, and, coming to Him who has washed away our sins in His own most precious blood, pray that He may deliver us alike from their guilt and power ; that in the dusk and darkness of this perishing world He may lift away the veil of our spiritual blindness, and make us partakers of the peace and purity of His own blameless life. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ;" they shall see Him now in Alp and lake, as His time-robe glows and palpitates with all the glories of that jewelled city of the captive's vision ; they shall see Him now in the beauty of those earthly temples where His shekinah yet hovers over the mercy-seat, where His glory is mirrored without a stain of earthly dimness in the face of Jesus Christ ; and when the time-vision has passed, they shall see Him in that home above which our Heavenly Bridegroom is preparing, where He is revealed in the fulness of eternal beauty without a cloud between.

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